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*Early Tuscan art from the 12th
to the 15th centuries*

William Martin Conway

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THE GALLERY OF ART OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTION, LIVERPOOL.
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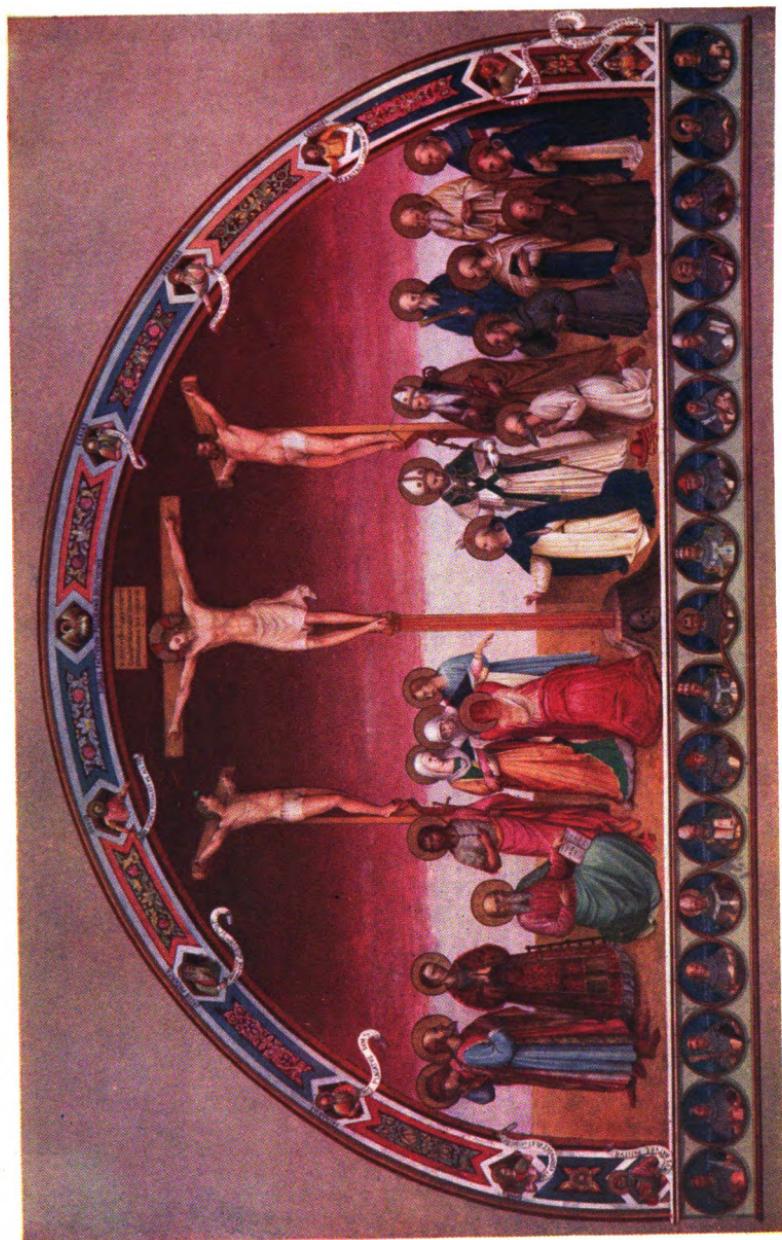
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Fra Angelico.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

San Marco, Florence.

EARLY TUSCAN ART

FROM THE 12TH TO THE
15TH CENTURIES

BY

SIR W. MARTIN CONWAY

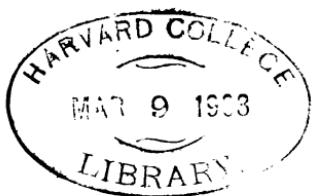
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TO

HENRY THODE

**PROFESSOR OF ART IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
HEIDELBURG**

HISTORIAN OF FRANCISCAN ART

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—THE FIRST IMPULSE	I
II.—FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE POPULAR REVOLUTION	48
III.—GIOTTO	92
IV.—THE SIENESE SCHOOL	140
V.—THE EFFECT OF THE DOMINICANS UPON ART IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY	177
VI.—FRA ANGELICO	219

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

✓ The Crucifixion (San Marco, Florence)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
· Baptistry and Cathedral at Pisa	<i>Facing page</i> 30
· Lintel of the East Portal of the Baptistry at Pisa	31
· Fragment of a Byzantine Sarcophagus (Campo Santo, Pisa)	<i>Facing page</i> 33
· Pulpit in the Baptistry at Pisa	37
· Madonna (Lower Church, Assisi)	43
Adoration of the Magi (Lucca Cathedral)	79
Cathedral Pulpit (Pisa)	83
Nativity (Baptistry Pulpit, Pisa); Nativity (Cathedral Pulpit, Pisa)	<i>Facing page</i> 85
The Last Judgment (Façade of Orvieto Cathedral)	86
The Resurrection (Rheims Cathedral)	88
The Upper Church, Assisi	99
St. Francis Preaching before Pope Honorius III. (Fresco in the Upper Church, Assisi)	<i>Facing page</i> 105
St. Francis before the Sultan (S. Croce, Florence).	<i>Between pages 120, 121, and facing the other print.</i>
St. Francis before the Sultan (Upper Church, Assisi)	<i>Between pages 120, 121, and facing the other print.</i>
Burial of John Baptist (Gates of the Baptistry, Florence)	<i>Facing page</i> 129
Good Government	161
Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas (Pisa)	184
Christ as Pilgrim	236
Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus (San Marco, Florence)	<i>Facing page</i> 237

Early Tuscan Art.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST IMPULSE.

AFTER the series of staggering blows dealt to the civilisation of the West by successive waves of barbarian invasion, the history of European Art during several centuries is a history of weak survivals and crude efforts. Throughout the Dark Ages it was only at Byzantium and in the Byzantine Empire that a school of Art of high quality had a continuous though chequered existence. But Byzantium cannot be regarded as Europe. It was an outpost of the great Oriental world whose Art-influences frequently touch and affect the West, and are in turn affected by it, but whose life is a thing apart from the life of Europe. For centuries the lands

that had been Roman, and those east of them now occupied by Teutonic peoples, were devastated by frequent wars. The old means of communication between place and place became less practicable; organization of large areas of country under a single government became impossible; continuous trade between distant lands virtually ceased; and great communities broke up into small local units. For a time, indeed, some vigorous master of a mobile fighting force might succeed in uniting under his sway a number of these local units, but the bond was essentially feeble and personal. With the passing of the conqueror, and the dissolution of the rudimentary organization that had depended on his individual genius, the bond was either wholly broken or so loosened as to be an ineffectual tie.

This period, though from the point of view of Roman civilization a period of destruction and decay, was in the history of the civilization of the world a period of birth and growth. Each breaking wave of inroading barbarians, which shattered the monuments and submerged

the institutions of Imperial Rome, carried the seeds of a larger life. The education of the new savage or semi-savage inhabitants began with the very day of their arrival upon the soil of the Empire. In process of time small local centres of growth appeared in different parts of Europe; local civilizations (at first of a very simple sort) began to arise, and, with them, rude local schools of Art. These young local schools preserved some ancient traditions, but mingled with them a new life and expressed a new spirit. They delighted in new forms of decoration and depicted new subjects in a new way. The history of such local nascent schools is an interesting, a complicated, and a difficult subject, with which we are not now concerned. Suffice it to say, that by the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh centuries, many of them had come into independent and even vigorous existence in different parts of the Western world.

The long period from about the fifth to the eleventh century may be described, from the point of view of civilization and government, as

a period of cellular growth. Only walled towns and strong castles could maintain themselves in the fighting chaos. There were limits to the possible size of a town, set by the conditions of the food supply; for a town could not retain a larger population than could be fed by the area of surrounding lands over which its protection extended. The principality dominated by a castle was likewise limited by the length of its striking arm. Thus there was room in Europe for a very large number both of castles and small towns. Monastic institutions fitted into the same scheme of things and had a corresponding growth. Each centre required a ruler—in those days of rudimentary organization, naturally a despot. Thus there grew up all over Europe a numerous baronial class of nobles, bishops, abbots, and knights, who controlled small communities and directed the expenditure of the surplus products of industry—of what I shall henceforward describe as the Art-Fund.

The eleventh century must have been a remarkable period of relative prosperity in the

West of Europe, otherwise Peter the Hermit, with all his eloquence, could not have aroused at the end of it the Crusading enthusiasm which his preaching inspired. The Crusades were proof of Europe's recovery from the barbarian invasions. Thenceforward the West had not only life enough for its own needs, vigour enough for its own internal organization, but it had a surplus to play with as it pleased. The Crusades were the first use that it made of this surplus. The same youthful, rollicking vigour that was manifested in them was shown in the growth of international commerce, the beginning of organized manufacture, and in the efflorescence of chivalry and monkhood. The voice of Europe was uplifted in the song of the Troubadour, and the gaiety of Nations became possible once more.

The great Saint and representative man of the twelfth century was Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), friend and contemporary of Suger. A comparison between Bernard and Francis of Assisi, if we had space for it, might be used as typical of the contrast of their times. Bernard

was a man of the governing caste, son of noble parents. His friends and first followers were nobles. He and they were students of the University of Paris. At the age of twenty-two he entered the aristocratic order of the Cistercians. After fifteen years of retirement he came forward as a great moral force. All manner of responsibilities were laid upon him. He drew up statutes for the Templars, reorganised the Cistercians, reformed the Cluniacs. Louis the Great appointed him to decide between Innocent II. and Anaclet, rival claimants of the Papacy. He reconciled the Milanese clergy with Rome. He procured the condemnation of Abailard by the Council of Sens. He founded 160 houses of his own order. He was author of many treatises and sermons. He was, perhaps, greatest of all as a writer of letters. He corresponded with most of the kings and potentates of Christendom. His advice was sought and followed by the great. He was the pre-eminent counsel giver of his day. In his letters, says Frederick Harrison, "from first to last there is no trace of dictation, no consciousness of self,

of any assumption of a right, no pride, anger, or rigour; there is nothing but the spontaneous outburst of a soul, which the sight of evil humiliates and hurts; which in the presence of oppression, of vice, of indolence, or of anarchy, is wrung with grief, pity, and remorse." Such was the characteristic leader of the twelfth century, and such was the basis of his wonderful authority. Evidently it was a day of life, growth, and promise.

In the twelfth century arts of all kinds began to flourish over the West. Cathedrals, monasteries, city palaces were built. Decoration became more elaborate, costume more rich, tools more efficient. It was a day, not merely of artistic promise, but of performance. The twelfth century Renascence was effected under the guidance and by the initiative of the noble class. Its arts were essentially aristocratic. Its architecture is that of the Baron's Castle, the Bishop's Cathedral Church, and (in Italy) the Noble's city palace. Its decorations tend to massive magnificence. Its leading qualities are dignity, splendour, and power. If twelfth cen-

tury Art appealed to the populace at all, it did so as a manifestation of the greatness and might of the ruling powers. There was nothing about it popularly pleasing, nothing to rejoice the hearts of the crowd or delight the fancy of the ignorant. That so few names of artists of this period should have come down to us is not matter for surprise. They were obscure craftsmen; the best of them were master-masons, working under the orders of a superior caste. There is something impersonal about their work, expressing as it does not the fancies of an individual but the pride of a class.

What I have thus far said is true of Western Europe generally, and of Italy as part of the West. With great local variety and short priorities of one locality before another, the general course of development was everywhere the same. Henceforward, however, it is with Italy alone that we are mainly concerned. Invaded, like the rest, by barbarian hordes, Italy retained more strongly than remoter countries the memory of her great imperial days. If she had forgotten, her conquerors would have re-

minded her ; for it was the ambition of Ostrogoths, Lombards, and Franks in turn, to revive, as far as they could, the glories of the past, whose ruins they beheld on all sides, and to appropriate those ruined glories to themselves. *Roma Caput Mundi* retained in the Pope a sovereign, whose claim to universal spiritual dominion was something more than a pale reminiscence of the temporal dominion of the Cæsars. Thus when the revival of Art began in Italy, artists naturally turned for inspiration to the surviving monuments of antiquity, which then existed in greater number and completeness than to-day. Partly by imitation, partly by the direct survival of technical traditions, the style fittingly designated Romanesque developed, not in Rome or Italy only, but in many parts of Northern Europe as well. Italy, however, was its centre—the country of its strongest growth and completest exposition.

But if Italian artists were more potently influenced by Imperial Roman traditions than, for example, were the artists of Northern France or of the Rhine, they were likewise more directly

brought in contact with two other powerful tendencies, the Byzantine and the Saracenic. Byzantium, as I have already said, was for many centuries, especially from the ninth to the twelfth, the most important Art-centre in Europe. When Constantine created it the capital of the Eastern Empire, he likewise made it a museum of a multitude of the finest then existing works of Classical Art. The best workmen were likewise conveyed to the new city and busily employed. You cannot, however, transplant a school of art. Transplantation involves change. Just as Greek artists, moved to Rome, produced a new style in the capital of the Cæsars, so Roman artists transferred to Byzantium were brought in contact with new influences, and led to originate a new style. We find this style emerging about the sixth century. Its most important factor was derived from the East, doubtless from Persia, that ancient home of vigorous Art-life. But Oriental exuberance was chastened by Greek reserve. Thus, from the sixth century onward, under the patronage of the splendid Imperial

Court, successive generations of artists, inheriting the matchless skill and traditional technical knowledge of Greece and Rome, produced beautiful works of art of all kinds in the Byzantine or Greek style. The Byzantine School, like the Byzantine Empire, had its ups and downs, its periods of prosperity and feebleness. Under Justinian it attained definite expression and flourished exceedingly. The iconoclastic troubles paralyzed it for a time, but in the ninth, tenth, and part of the eleventh centuries it enjoyed a glorious revival, and some of its finest works were then produced.

The Venetian conquest of Constantinople in 1204, while injurious to the prosperity of the Eastern Empire, and ultimate cause of its final ruin, helped to spread the influence of its arts over the West. The walls of St. Mark's at Venice to-day are beautified by the sculptured stones, at that time pillaged from Byzantium by the famous Doge Enrico Dandalo. The treasury of the same wonderful church still contains the vessels of crystal, the enamelled plates of gold, the jewelled bookbindings, and other beau-

tiful objects then carried away from the church of Santa Sophia—works which in those days the artists of no other city in the world could have matched. The vitality of the Byzantine School, even after centuries of calamity and when the conquering Turks were already almost at the city's gates, is proved by the splendid mosaic decorations of the church now known as the Kahrije Jami; whilst some of the best Byzantine mosaics in St. Mark's at Venice are those in the Baptistery, which cannot be earlier than the fourteenth century and may even belong to the fifteenth.

Modern travellers usually see little true Byzantine work. They are accustomed to associate the name with all manner of bad old paintings and late, even modern, Greek devotional objects. They are told that Byzantine artists did nothing but repeat with endless iteration the same series of subjects treated in the same manner. The actual Byzantine works which are likely to attract their attention are mosaics which have been repeatedly restored. Now wall-mosaics, in the nature of things, must be

simple in design, and, compared with paintings, crude in execution. If, instead of estimating Byzantine Art by the mosaic decorations of Ravenna and Venice, the student will search out the sculptured marbles and fine ivory carvings that were actually made in Constantinople by accomplished workmen, he will derive from them a very different estimate of the quality and power of their Art.

Its main characteristics are dignity and refinement. There is no stiffness in a Byzantine figure of good period. The stiffness in works of the Byzantine style is a quality applied by Western workmen attempting to imitate the grave formality of the East. If I could plant the reader in the nave of St. Mark's at Venice, and could show him the gilded bas-relief of the Virgin, immured just to the left of the entrance, he would learn in a moment of what benign beauty and dignified grace Byzantine sculptors were capable. The enamelled plaques of the wonderful Pala-d'Oro above the high-altar, the work of many hands and various dates, would complete the lesson. He would find them marvel-

lous in delicacy, matchless in colour, and of utmost refinement in design. If with these works before him he would call up the memory of any European work of art whatsoever, made before the end of the twelfth century, he would realize the pre-eminence of the Byzantines, not only in technical skill (wherein they have never been surpassed) but in grace, beauty, and refinement.

While the artists of Europe were vaguely feeling their way to artistic expression, the artists of Byzantium possessed an elaborate style, a definite ideal, and every technical power required for its complete embodiment. When therefore, at the close of the Dark Ages, the demand for Art arose in Western Europe, it was inevitable that men should turn for inspiration to Byzantium. A continual succession of craftsmen from that city travelled westward and found employment. The Byzantine style filtered through the West and became a more or less important factor in every nascent Western school. Italy, owing to its geographical position and commercial relations with the East, naturally

experienced Byzantine influences more strongly than any other country.

The amount of influence exercised by the arts of the Mussulman peoples upon the rising schools of Europe is more difficult to estimate. The conquering Arabs had no arts of their own save the arts of speech. For all the formative arts they were dependent upon the peoples they overcame. Denying themselves, as they did, the right to represent the human form, they obtained in compensation a matchless power of decorative design. Their woven stuffs, their glass and beaten metal, their Arabesque mural decorations, became, and throughout the Middle Ages remained, the best in the world. All that Venetian workmen in their best days ever made in this kind was but an imitation of the unsurpassable products of the peoples of Islam. To what extent the Saracenic style may have been indebted in its origin to Byzantium we cannot yet say. The probability seems to be that the debt was small, and that the style arose from a mingling of the styles of the Sassanid artists of Persia and the Coptic craftsmen of Egypt.

The history of the origin of Saracenic architecture has yet to be written. The first definitely Saracenic building to which we can point is the mosque of Ibn-Tulun at Cairo, which we know to have been copied from a mosque at Samarra, showing distinct Sassanian traditions. The style once initiated developed, and in subsequent centuries produced a multitude of beautiful buildings in every part of the Mussulman world. Splendid mosques and baths, fine caravanserais, and beautifully decorated houses were common all over the Eastern world at the time of the Crusades. By war, and by the commerce that war preceded and helped to beget, the men of Europe, and especially the noble and commercial classes—the men controlling the European Art-Fund—were brought in contact with this architecture, and could not fail to be struck by its grace and beauty, so far superior to that of their castles and churches at home.

The influence of the arts of Islam upon the West was continuous. It affected architecture, but it affected manufactures still more strongly. We cannot now attempt to trace that influence

in detail. For present purposes it suffices if we bear in mind that the Italian workmen of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries must have had the products of Syria and Egypt often before their eyes, and that the reputation of the buildings of Islam and some idea of their character and style must have been known to the Architects and Guilds of Masons who built the twelfth and thirteenth century cathedrals and palaces of Italy and of the whole West of Europe.

The South of Italy and Sicily fell more strongly under combined Byzantine and Saracenic influences than any other part of Christendom. For several centuries Sicily (A.D. 535—827) and an important part of South Italy, largely Greek in blood, formed an integral part of the Eastern Empire. Greek was a living language there down to the twelfth century. At the time of the iconoclastic troubles in Constantinople there was a considerable immigration of the supporters of images into these countries. We know of ninety-seven Basilean convents founded in Calabria at this time. For two cen-

turies and a half (827—1090) Sicily was under Saracenic government, the tenth century being the culminating period of Saracenic prosperity there, a time of abundant Art-production. When the Saracens were succeeded by the Normans (1090—1194) and they by the Germans (1194—1268) both the Saracenic and Byzantine styles had obtained a firm hold on Sicily and the South. Numerous examples of architecture and mosaic decoration might be quoted in illustration of this statement, which holds true also for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The Sicilian churches of this period were sometimes Romanesque in plan, as at Monreale and Cefalù, sometimes Byzantine. The architectural details are commonly Saracenic, the decorative sculpture frequently Byzantine in character. Mosaics, as we might expect, show strongest Byzantine influence, and were often, as at Cefalù, the work of Greek craftsmen. In the Palatine Chapel at Palermo we find mosaics of about 1143. The apse contains figures of Christ and saints, the rest of the church scenes from the Old and New Testaments of modified

Byzantine character; but the roof is decorated in Saracenic style and even adorned with Cufic inscriptions. How far these works were known in Central and Northern Italy we cannot say. They must have been known at such ports as Pisa, where we shall presently find a South Italian artist actively employed. With Venice at one end of the peninsula and Sicily at the other so intimately affected by the Greek style, the intervening districts naturally experienced, more or less, the same influence.

In Italy and Sicily the twelfth century was a building epoch. Already in 1063 the Church of St. Mark at Venice (such as we now see it) and the Cathedral of Pisa were founded; and the Cathedral of St. Martin at Lucca was begun about the same time. We may remember the foundation of those three important buildings as practically contemporary with the Norman conquest of England. It is noteworthy that two of them arose in growing ports enriched by Oriental commerce. Pisa, at that time, had intimate relations with Tunis and Egypt. Venice, as always, was more closely in touch with Constan-

tinople. St. Mark's was frankly imitated from the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, which was pulled down in 1464. Except for later Gothic additions, St. Mark's is a purely Byzantine edifice. Indirectly it may to some extent have influenced the development of architecture throughout Italy, but its effect beyond Venetia must have been small and may be neglected. It is, however, worth mention in this place that, in the thirteenth century, workmen were sent from Venice to Rome to complete the mosaic decoration of S. Paolo *fuori le mure*.

The Pisan Cathedral and Baptistry are of more complicated origin. They belong to a group of buildings at Pisa, Lucca, and as far away as Florence, erected mainly during the twelfth century, which possess a marked style of their own. In plan and general design they are in no wise Byzantine but Romanesque, descending by unbroken tradition from the days of the later Empire. As the merchants and nobles of Pisa grew rich and progressed in refinement, it appears that there developed amongst them a dilettante appreciation for old Roman work. It

is stated, for instance, that they sought for fine carved Roman Sarcophagi and other sculptured marbles and imported them in their ships wherever they could find them. A wealthy Pisan of the twelfth century liked to be buried, when his time came, in a Roman sarcophagus. Thus Pisa in process of time came to possess quite a museum of good classical sculpture of a decorative kind.

Owing to the proximity of the Carrara mountains, marble was always plentiful at Pisa and Lucca, and there were always sculptors of a sort in that region capable of working it. It is easy at the present day to find examples of their rude and often frightful handiwork. The Pisan gentry knew enough to prefer antique sculpture to that. A little further inland, at Lucca, local sculptors were evidently better appreciated. Still further inland they probably had the field to themselves, for the transport of any large piece of finished sculpture overland along mediæval roads must have been almost impossible.

As a rule, in speaking of the revival of Italian Art, we are accustomed to think of Flor-

ence as the centre of the movement. In fact, Florence lagged behind. Rome, Sicily, Pisa, Lucca, and Venice led the way. If it were not necessary to limit the scope of our present survey we might find in the Rome of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries no inconsiderable amount of interesting work. Great buildings were raised or begun at that time. Important mosaic decorations and still existing series of wall paintings were made. But from Rome we should only learn the same lesson that is taught by Pisa, Lucca, and Florence. To them, therefore, our attention may be confined.

When, in consequence of settled industry and efficient defence against external invasion and internal feud, the cities of Italy began to grow rich, wealth came at first into the hands of the governing classes. These, as we have seen, were the nobles. It was the nobles, therefore, who presided over the first stage of the Italian artistic renaissance. What they wanted were palaces, cathedrals, and churches. They were desirous that the buildings they erected should be magnificent ; creditable to the city that was

theirs, creditable to themselves as men of wealth and power. They had no alternative but to employ such artists and craftsmen as the day afforded, and to supply them with means for doing the best they were capable of. They were, in fact, just in the position of the people of Liverpool, who want a cathedral to-day. The people of Liverpool vaguely hope to possess a fine building; but they cannot design one for themselves, nor build it. They must choose among existing architects and contractors according to their lights. What they can settle by resolution of public meeting is the general style of the future building, which they for their part decided should be Gothic—thereby probably dimly meaning that they would like it to resemble Westminster Abbey rather than St. Paul's. Similarly the men of Pisa and Lucca asked for a Roman building, those of Venice for a Byzantine, each city wanting the similitude of the finest kind of church they knew of—Pisans being more familiar with Rome, Venetians with Constantinople. When, however, the building actually came to be erected,

the people of Pisa and Lucca found, what the people of Liverpool will likewise some day discover, that you may settle the general style of a building, but that the character of the work when actually made depends not upon your orders but upon the feelings, ideals, and capacities of the men who do the work. Forgeries in an old style you can get, but not works of vital art.

Pisa and Lucca, from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, had four classes of workmen to draw upon. These were Greeks, local artificers, Lombards from the Como direction, called Comaschi, and South Italians.* The Greeks were superior workmen, wholly Byzantine in feeling, tradition, and skill. The local men were rude masons and little more. The Comaschi were a guild of masons, carvers, and architects, North European in their leanings. They seem

* Works by Lombard masons of the Como School exist in many places in the neighbourhood of Lucca. There are sculptures of 1099 and later at Brancoli and Berceto. At Pistoja are signed works of Gruamons and his brother Adeodatus (1162, 1166, etc.). At Grapoli is a pulpit and a hideous figure of St. Michael. At Pisa and elsewhere are works by Biduinus, a Lombard, who was under the influence of Bonannus, who made the bronze gates at Pisa with date-palms and orange-trees upon them.

to have wandered all over Europe and worked wherever they could find a job, just as Italian masons do to-day, labouring indifferently on the dam at Philæ, or on a sky-scraper in New York, and returning home at frequent intervals. The South Italian artists and craftsmen united some knowledge of the Saracenic style to Byzantine and classical Roman traditions. In the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth century buildings of Pisa and Lucca, we find traces of the activity of men drawn from these four classes. Naturally the Roman style in their hands underwent extensive modifications, and the buildings that resulted were not Roman at all, but in a new style, which we may call early Tuscan.

Take, for example, the cathedral at Lucca. Its façade is the characteristic feature on which the best skill obtainable was lavished. The church itself was first built and substantially finished in the eleventh century. The façade was built on to it during the next hundred and fifty years. It consists of a great vaulted portico, entered by three large arches from the Piazza, and giving access to the church by three

doorways opposite the arches. Above the portico are three galleries (one over the other) of small marble columns carrying round arches. The great portico was built in the last years of the twelfth century, the three galleries in the first years of the thirteenth (the lowest is dated 1204), while the decoration of the portals into the church and of the wall between them and above them went on from about 1230 till 1260. In all the sculpture decorating this façade I can find small trace of Byzantine influence. The twelve representations of the occupations of the months were done by Como workmen, and are reminiscent of French Gothic sculpture of the day. The incidents from the legend of St. Martin, with their large simple drapery and their monumental character, may likewise be Como work, done under the direction, perhaps, of the architect Guidetto, who in 1246 made under Greek influence the font for the Baptistery at Pisa, so highly praised by Ruskin. In none of these bas-reliefs can we trace classical influence. In so far as they are not French they are a spontaneous North-Italian

product. When, however, we come to the north portal we find work of another character. The tympanum is occupied by a descent from the Cross, known to have been made by Niccolo Pisano ; whilst the lintel below it was either by him or by his assistants. Here we find a complete mingling of styles. Classical tradition is strong in some figures ; Gothic influence appears in others ; whilst, of the architecture introduced in the background, some is Romanesque, some Gothic.

A short distance away rises the Church of San Michele, whose façade bears a general resemblance to that of the cathedral, and was building about the same time. Its decoration consisted of a multitude of vegetable and animal figures, inlaid in the flat surface of the encasing marble. In its unrestored condition it received Ruskin's warmest eulogy, but the whole is now replaced by a cold modern copy, unsoftened by the hand of time, from which little æsthetic pleasure can be derived.* Incidentally, it is

* Two engravings in *Stones of Venice* and *Seven Lamps* are the best existing records of its unrestored aspect.

worth notice that this façade, beloved by Ruskin so dearly, was described by Leighton as “unfathomed foolishness.” Are we, therefore, to conclude that one of these great men was wholly right and the other wholly wrong? I think not. Their radical difference of judgment arose from the fact that in the same work of art each beheld a quality not discerned by the other, and each failed to behold a quality by the other discerned. Ruskin saw, and was specially capable of appreciating, the details of decoration, but he was careless about the general design. Leighton was struck by the feebleness of the general design, regarded as a work of architecture, for which the decorative details (possibly when he saw them already restored) were no compensation in his eyes. Thus difficult is it for any man, however gifted, to preserve at all times the balance of all his powers of discrimination.

This scheme of inlaid decoration is to be regarded as an example of Saracenic influence. Probably we must look to Cairo and Damascus for the origin of the double columns, knotted together as if they were ropes, examples of

which may be found all over Italy. They may, indeed, have come to Venice by way of Constantinople, but even so I do not believe them to have been of Byzantine invention. Como architects adopted them early in the thirteenth century, as the Broletto of Como stands to prove. The inlaid beasts of Lucca were certainly of Mussulman origin, and their parallel can be found in the East to-day.

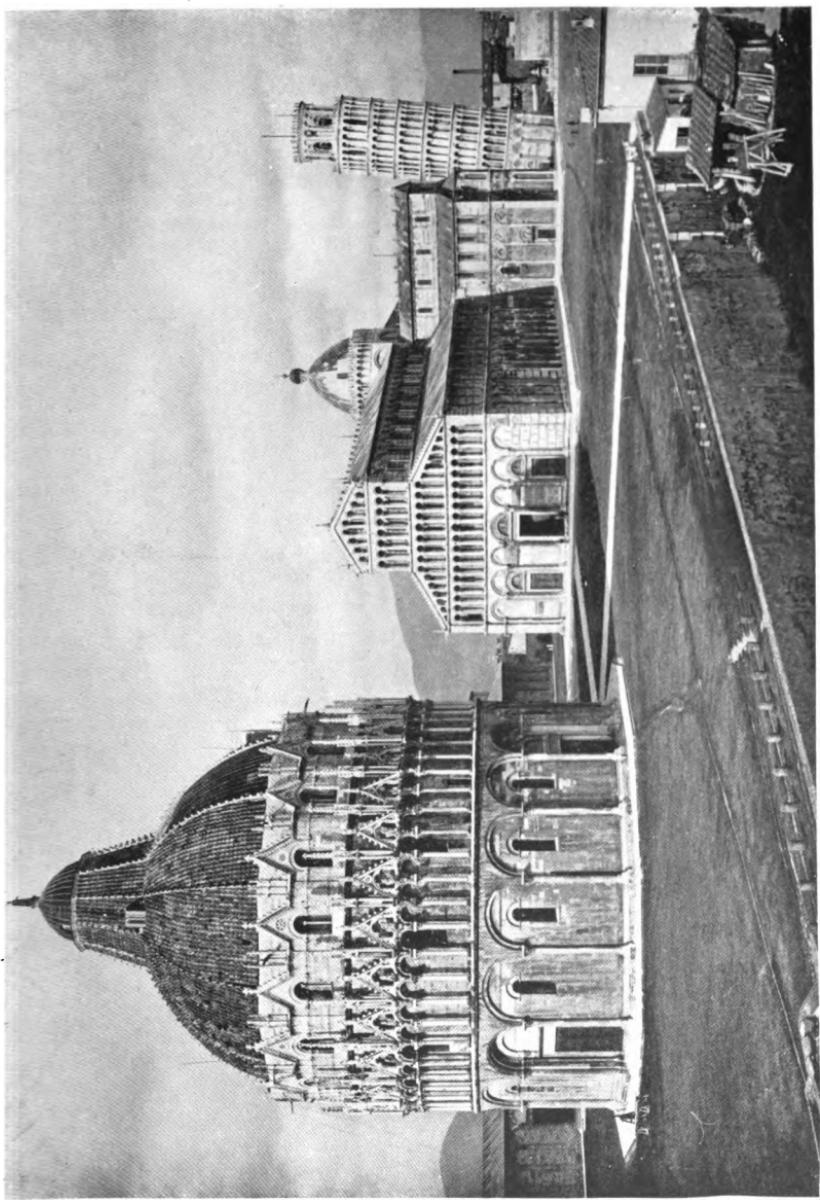
Equally instructive, as showing the various factors that combined to produce the first Italian Renaissance, are the churches at Pisa—especially the wonderful group of Cathedral, Baptistry, and Campanile, which was built simultaneously with the Lucca churches. Of the Campanile, the world-renowned Leaning Tower, we need say no more than that it is architecturally an example of what Leighton called “unfathomed foolishness”; but no such stricture can be passed on the Cathedral or the Baptistry. The former is a Christian Basilica, Romanesque in general plan; but, had there been no Byzantium, the Baptistry would certainly have been different. The well-known

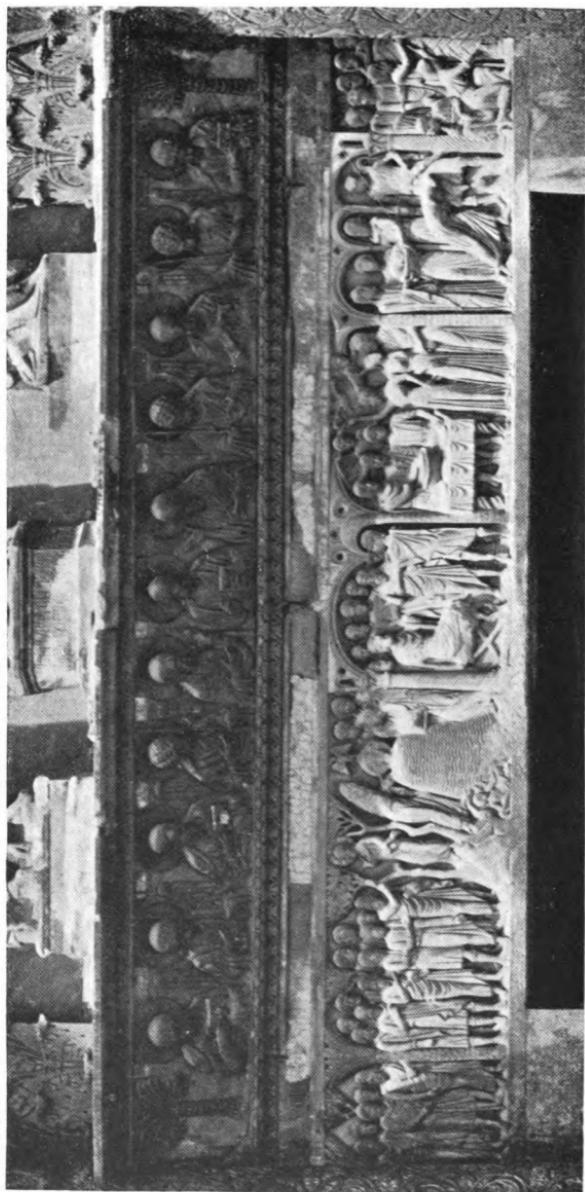
Baptistery at Florence is an example of a contemporary Romanesque building of the same kind. The differences between them are due to the strength of Byzantine influence at Pisa and the absence of it at Florence. But it is in the details of sculptured decoration at Pisa that we find direct evidence of the participation of Greek artists. It is customary nowadays to regard Vasari's statements with grave suspicion. He is, however, uncommonly likely to be right when he records the traditions current in his day. He says that in Niccolo Pisano's time certain Greek sculptors were carving the figures and other incised ornaments of the Cathedral and Baptistery of Pisa, and he further states that "besides the ancient sarcophagi there were many spoils of marbles brought by the Pisan fleet," amongst which doubtless may be numbered some fine pieces of Byzantine, and perhaps even of Saracenic, work still discoverable in the Campo Santo.

It is worth mentioning that Diotisalvi, the architect of the Baptistery, was a Lucca man, who had built St. Cristoforo's at home, before

BAPTISTERY AND CATHEDRAL AT PISA.

Alinari, Photo.





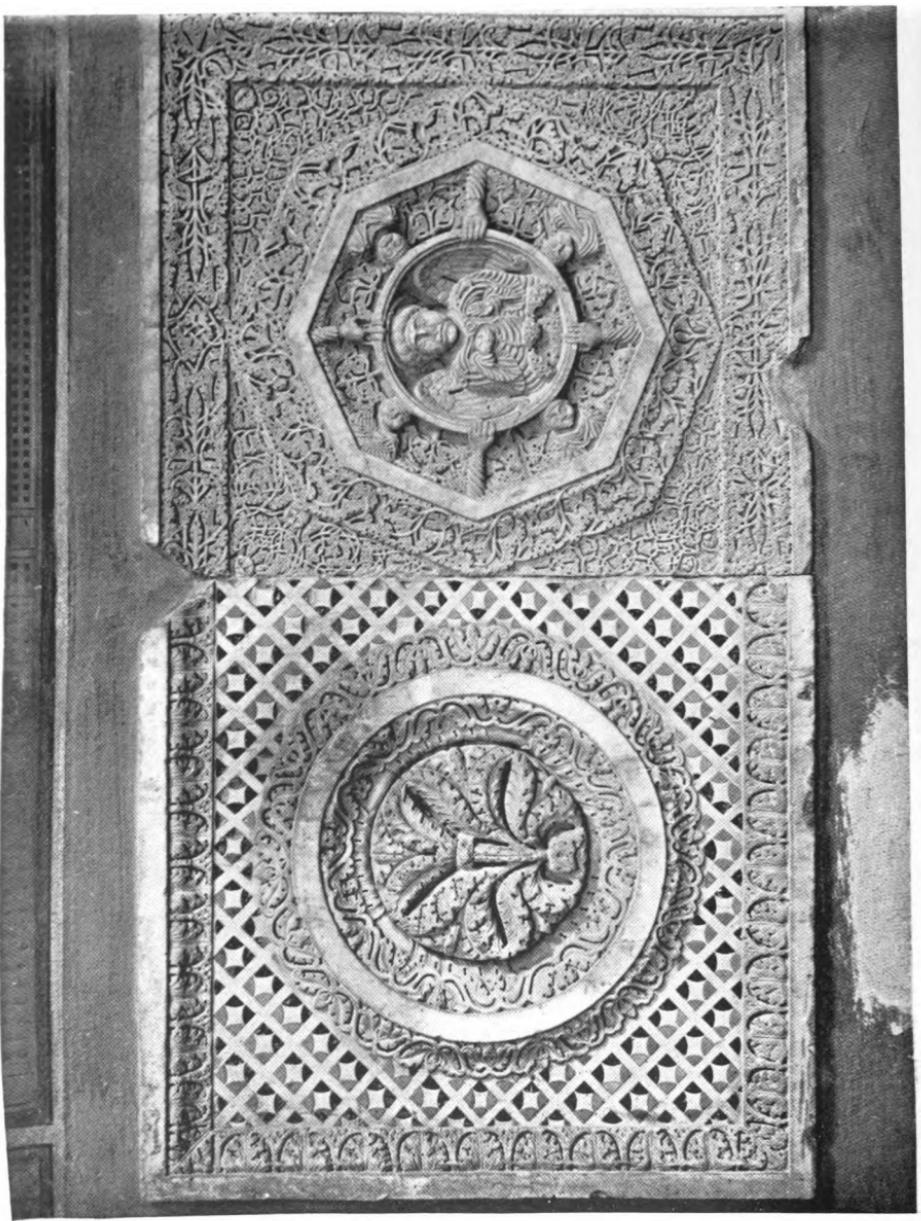
Altanari, Photo.

LINTEL OF THE EAST PORTAL OF THE BAPTISTERY AT PISA.

(in 1158) he was fetched away to Pisa to superintend a greater work. It was evidently at Pisa that he fell under Byzantine influence. For all we know a Greek may have been associated with him as designer of the Baptistry. At all events, the sculptors of much of the decoration were certainly Greeks. As an example of pure Byzantine work of a fine type, probably carved on the spot and for its place, I would cite the upper lintel stone of the eastern portal of the Baptistry, whereon are depicted Christ blessing the Cup, with the Virgin on His right, John the Baptist on His left, and four angels flanking them on either side, the two ends of the band being pleasantly filled with the similitude of palm-trees. Nothing can be imagined more severe, nothing more dignified, than these half-length figures. As architectural decoration they fulfil every requirement. Their drapery is perfectly simple. There is nothing experimental or uncertain about the work. The stone is wrought to a high degree of finish; faces and figures reproduce forms as severely typical as those of any

statue of Buddha. It is not popular work in any sense, but traditional, and evidently comes from no turbulent, rapidly developing or changing society, but from one which has attained its final form and produced its ripest fruit.

Equally remarkable, and for its position equally decorative, is the lower belt of carving, once separated from the upper by an inscription now unfortunately lost. At first sight it seems so different from the other that Ruskin described it as "already semi-Gothic." Yet on close examination I find it to be wholly free from Northern influence. As in the upper stone we have a fine example of the Byzantine emblematic treatment, in the lower we find a specimen of Byzantine narrative, beautifully wrought out in every detail, compact, and as complete a telling of the legend as the space could be made to hold. The decorative purpose of the work is never for a moment subordinated to popular narrative effect. The story is only told to those who will patiently puzzle it out, and by no means shouted from the wall in the later fashion of the fourteenth century.



It is a beautiful example of Byzantine reserve, a quality inherited from classical times and never lost by Greek artists even down to the present day.

Portions of a very interesting sarcophagus, labelled Byzantine, are preserved in the Pisa Campo Santo, and were doubtless twelfth or thirteenth century loot from some Levantine place. Pure Byzantine they are not, as an examination of the figures in the central discs of the panels immediately shows. The lovely decoration seems to me rather Arabesque than Byzantine. Let it suffice for us to call it Levantine. Of the four panels required for the face and ends of the sarcophagus one was lacking. Its place was supplied by a panel of local work, resembling the decorative panels that form the breast-work surrounding the font in the Baptistry. One of the latter panels is obviously imitated from one of these older imported panels, and affords us an admirable instance and proof of the way in which the nascent Pisan style was influenced by older styles. The new panels are bolder in design,

calculated to produce their effect at a greater distance, and more under the dominion of architecture than the older panels. Those existed to be looked at for their own sake; the new panels are made to contribute to the general effect of a great composition. No one can enter the Baptistry and not feel its interior to be enriched by them. Yet, during somewhat long and frequent visits to that building I have seldom seen a visitor stop to look at them. Whether they were the work of Greeks acting under the orders of a local architect, or of local sculptors inspired by Oriental examples such as the one I have shewn you, I cannot say. The result in either case is the same. Oriental decorative traditions found their way into Pisan workshops and produced a permanent effect on the workmen.

In this medium of mingling art traditions and vigorous artistic impulse, Niccolo Pisano grew up and learnt his craft as mason, sculptor, and architect. We need now only concern ourselves with one of his works, the famous pulpit in the Pisan Baptistry, which he finished in the year

1260. He may then have been about fifty years old. At all events, he was no longer young; his style was formed; he was an artist of experience. A single glance at the pulpit suffices to show the strength of the Roman classical tradition by which the artist was animated. We do not need Vasari to tell us that Niccolo was an earnest student of Roman sculpture. He was not the first local artist to imitate Roman work, for Biduinus had done so before him, copying in bas-relief a lion slaughtering a roe, which the visitor to the Campo Santo may still behold. Biduinus, however, was a poor artist; Niccolo a great one. We can point to a vase and sarcophagus, still preserved in the Campo Santo, from which he took hints; but his works are not copies of the antique, though inspired by the antique style. If he learnt anything from the Greek sculptors, it was the delicate manipulation of marble. His sculptures are carried to a finer finish than those of any earlier local sculptor. His style of design, however, is wholly free from Byzantine tendency. His figures are arranged, and

indeed overcrowded, in the later Roman way, but they incarnate the classical, not the Byzantine dignity. His Virgin is a Juno, not by any means the Greek Μήτηρ θεού. His angels are not the Byzantine courtiers of the Greeks. He arrived at his forms by combined study of nature and of classical Roman remains. There is thus nothing popular about his treatment. He was not appealing to the multitude, but to a class. The employers for whom he worked set the tone of his work. His art is aristocratic—rich, magnificent, dignified, learned, as the arts in aristocratic periods are wont to be.

The architecture of Niccolo's pulpit sets us a more difficult problem to solve. We can find the sources of his sculpture style, but whence came the architectural motive? Earlier pulpits were oblong in plan. The hexagonal form of this one may have been suggested by the roundness of the building in which, it was to stand. If the cusped arches and pilasters between them were removed, and the body of the pulpit were placed directly on the capitals of the columns, the thing would be Romanesque.



Altinari, Photo.

Niccolò Pisano.

PULPIT IN THE BAPTISTERY AT PISA.

Facing page 31.

There are two Byzantine capitals under the staircase, but I doubt their belonging to Niccolo's design, for they are quite out of harmony with the rest. The question that awaits an answer is, Where did the cusped arches come from? They are not Byzantine. Cusped arches, indeed, are found in France in the early years of the thirteenth century, as at St. Jean in Châlons-sur-Marne, at Amiens, and at Sées. We find a quatre-foil window in 1215. Not improbably, if more twelfth or early thirteenth century Florentine and Pisan palaces had come down to us, we might find examples of cusped arches in them also, earlier in date than this pulpit.

The destruction of palaces that went on in the thirteenth century was wholesale. The materials of at least sixty of them were used up in ten years in Florence alone for building the city walls. From ancient accounts we gather that the façades of twelfth century Tuscan palaces resembled those of the Pisan and Lucca churches, and, like them, were decorated with arcaded galleries. Possibly enough, Niccolo's trefoil arches might find a

parallel in some of these destroyed façades. Or he may have taken the idea of them from some Como workman. Ultimately, however, they are doubtless of Oriental origin. Niccolo uses them in no experimental manner. By means of them he gives to his pulpit a third horizontal division, beautifully proportioned between the other two. The result is admirable. The pulpit was imitated several times both by himself and by his pupils, but not equalled. It is to be regarded, not as an innovating example of a new style, but as the culmination of a style that had been developing for at least two centuries and was on the verge of being replaced by another. Niccolo, as we shall hereafter see, lived to be himself affected by the new tendencies, and injuriously affected. He is to be remembered as the last and greatest sculptor of the first Italian Renaissance, of that movement which began in the eleventh century and was closed for Italy at the end of the thirteenth.

We have now, in conclusion, to enquire what was the condition of the pictorial arts during

this same period. The old writers give us the impression that painting at this time was done chiefly by Greek masters. But such poor remains of mural decoration as have come down to us make it certain that local painters were employed in no inconsiderable number. It is easy to prove that, side by side with Greek artists and Italians working under them, paintings were made and mosaics designed in a style that was not Greek. Painting, in fact, tells the same tale that we have heard from architecture and sculpture. It shows that when the demand for works of art revived, under the impulse of growing prosperity, in the chief centres of Italian wealth, patrons availed themselves of such skill as the localities afforded, importing where possible the best artists they could procure from abroad to supervise and direct native workmen. It shows also that local painters, stimulated by steadier employment to improve their powers, turned, like the sculptors, to study the best examples of their Art accessible to them. We find several instances of a return to classical models, especially in details

of painted decoration ; but we likewise find that Byzantine influences were much stronger over painting than they were over sculpture, for the simple reason that surviving classical Roman paintings of a Christian type were few and unimportant, whilst the whole Christian world was flooded with the exported product of the painters' studios of Constantinople.

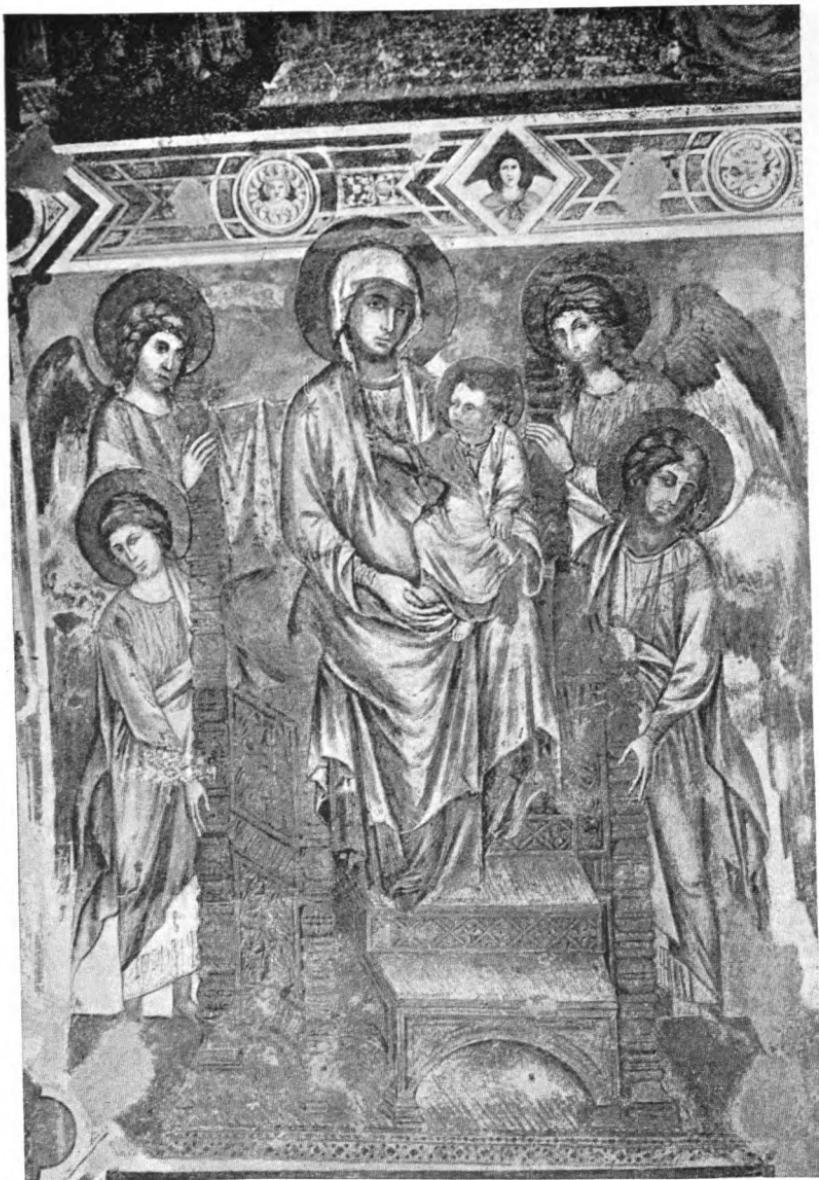
It seems clear that in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, such cities as Pisa, Lucca, Siena, Florence, and still more Venice, supplied themselves with the panel pictures they required by trade with Constantinople. The galleries of Pisa and Siena to-day are singularly rich in old Byzantine pictures and icons, chiefly of an inferior kind. For one that has survived, a hundred may have been destroyed. Thus, as far as panel pictures were concerned, the patron of those days was accustomed to the Byzantine style and wanted nothing better. In wall decoration local painters may have had a freer hand, but they could only obtain approbation for panel pictures similar to those produced by Byzantine artists.

There is nothing surprising in this when we remember that pictures at that time were only required as decorative aids to devotion. No feeling is more conservative as to forms than the devotional. The recent action of the Liverpool Cathedral Committee is an excellent case in point. They declared that Gothic architecture is essentially devotional architecture. Historically of course it is nothing of the sort, but English people have been so long accustomed to worshipping in Gothic churches that they prefer to build a forged Wardour Street Cathedral in that style than to set up a better edifice in the style of our own day.

Tuscan painters thus had their style decided for them; and that is doubtless why they lagged in development behind contemporary sculptors and architects. Imported pictures were naturally of small size, but with so many large churches building, it was not unnatural that large altar pieces should presently have been called for. I must so far anticipate as to say that in the middle of the thirteenth century, owing to the Franciscan movement, the Adora-

tion of the Virgin received a great stimulus, and imposing pictures of her were required. Large paintings of Christ on the Cross were likewise demanded. The best painters set themselves mainly to produce works of these two kinds. It is consequently among the large Madonnas and Crucifixions of the thirteenth century that we find the most finished examples of painting, belonging to this epoch of Italian Art. Many of these large Madonnas and Crucifixions have survived, not because of their preciousness as Works of Art, but through the religious sentiment that gathered about them.

In the Church of San Dominico at Siena was a famous Madonna by the painter Guido. It is now in the Palazzo Publico, and bears the modern date 1221. If this date could be proved correct, we should be compelled to recognise Guido of Siena as the first Italian painter who mastered the Byzantine style and adapted it to Tuscan requirements. Other thirteenth century artists of importance were the Berlingheri of Pescia, certain nameless artists who painted frescoes at Assisi, Deodati



Alinari, Photo.

Cimabue.

MADONNA.

Lower Church, Assisi.

Facing page

Orlandi of Lucca, Giunta of Pisa, and more. The work of all these men shows the effort of local artists to emulate the Greek style. If naturalistic tendencies can be discovered in their pictures, they found entrance not in consequence of any striving of the artists to modify or develop the Greek style in a new direction, but because the style was foreign and they could not entirely submerge themselves in it.

The greatest of the Byzantinized Italian painters was Cimabue. Born in the first half of the thirteenth century, he doubtless learned his art, as tradition asserts, under Greek masters. I can find no trace in any of his works of a desire to innovate. He remained to the close of his life thoroughly Greek in feeling. Our estimate of him must be based on the Madonna in the Academy at Florence, the Rucellai Madonna in Santa Maria Morella, some ruined frescoes and the beautiful Madonna with angels at Assisi. The Madonnas in the Louvre and the National Gallery are probably school-pictures, closely imitated from his works. Finally he is known to have been

the designer of the figure of St. John the Baptist in the Apse-Mosaic of the Cathedral at Pisa. The finest and most mature of these pictures is undoubtedly the Madonna and angels painted on a wall of the lower Church of Assisi. One glance at a photograph of it suffices to show that here we have no innovator struggling to express a new feeling in a new way, but the accomplished exponent of an ancient and established tradition. The artistic striving of two centuries had led to this, that now there were in Italy painters, who possessed mastery in the old Christian style, men capable of depicting with all needful refinement of finish and pleasant dexterity of technique the Queen and Courtiers of Heaven, splendid in dignity, benign, and yet to us who know the pictures that were to follow in the centuries then to come, how aloof! how reserved! how sundered from the common flesh and blood of human mother and child.

Yet in this dignity, these large and simple forms, this ideal majestic calm, there lingered, nay, lived again the ancient classical power

which might forthwith have blossomed, in who shall say what glory, if the times had been propitious and the demand for work of this character had continued. But a new day was at hand, new forces were working, destined presently to revolutionize society and place the control of the Art-Fund in the hands of new men whom the old aristocratic and dignified ideals did not please. With this revolution the First Italian Renaissance was brought to a close. Cimabue is not to be regarded as the first Master of the new epoch, but as one of the last and one of the greatest of the old. What he was at Florence, that was Duccio at Siena—great Masters both of them, Greeks at heart, the last of their artistic race. With Niccolo Pisano, Cimabue, and Duccio the old order passed away, and the promise of an immediate classical revival ceased. Niccolo in his old age experienced and yielded to the new influences. Cimabue and Duccio never gave way to them. They must have felt the changes that were at hand; but the dignity of the Past had mastered their minds, and the old

Ideals lived too strongly in them to be abandoned.

There is something splendid in this Artistic loyalty to the Past, like that of a noble caste to an old Régime. The time may be against them: they will not yield to the time. Popular forces may be urging them into new paths; they will not budge; they stick to the old. While life is in them they adhere to the Ideal to which they were born. It is at the moment of perishing that some societies show themselves at their best. Their last flower is finest. Thus it was with the aristocratic classical Renaissance in Italy. It produced great works and seemed to be on the verge of producing greater when life was withdrawn from it, and it made way for a new movement, animated by a new and conquering Ideal, and carried on by a new class of men. To this movement our attention must now be turned.

I shall have failed in my purpose, if I have not implanted a suspicion in your minds, to be verified hereafter I trust, or refuted, by your own studies of the actual monuments of the

period, that the works of Art, made in Italy in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, possess high qualities of their own, different in kind from those of later Italian Schools, but equally precious. Blot out from Venice, Verona, Lombardy, Tuscany, Rome, and Sicily the buildings, mosaics, sculptures, and paintings made during this period ; Italy would be notably impoverished, especially in the element of artistic grandeur. The Renaissance did not begin with Giotto. Before he was born, it had been proceeding for nearly three centuries, and even before them Art had never been wholly extinct. It is only in the North-West of Europe that we can properly speak of the Dark Ages. The lamp of Art burned in Italy from almost pre-historic times, and burns to-day. It has burned low during long periods ; sometimes it has flickered as though about to expire ; but it has always revived to shine even brighter than before. Who shall say what the future may yet have in store for that fair country and fascinating race to which civilization is so deeply indebted ?

CHAPTER II.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE POPULAR
REVOLUTION.

IN the previous chapter I endeavoured to sketch the state of the arts and of civilization in Italy during the twelfth and part of the thirteenth centuries. A great change was at hand. The period was one of increasing upper-class prosperity, growing refinement, developing luxury, expanding trade. The relatively rich grew richer, the established nobility more powerful. It was an age of town growth. Population seems to have flocked to and crowded the towns, where new-built palaces crushed the hovels of the abounding poor. We hear little about the poor of those days, but we can infer that poverty was grinding. The poor must have

lived on the verge of possible sustenance, for when famine came they died in multitudes. Leprosy was rife amongst them ; plague frequent. The monastic orders strong at that time were mainly aristocratic, such as the Clunyites, cultivators of learning and peace in a tumultuous age. Their business was to save their own souls, not the souls of others. The poor suffered in silence chiefly. Little attention was paid to them. There was hardly any folk-preaching. Such sermons as were delivered were, for the most part, in Latin, and dealt with hair-splitting scholastic questions, doctrinal disquisitions, types, symbols, and allegories, outside the range of the popular mind. A specimen Bishop of the day, when asked to permit an itinerant evangelist to preach, replied, "I can do all the preaching my people need." His idea of spiritual pabulum for his diocese was probably half-a-dozen Latin sermons formally read on special occasions during the year.

Yet at this time of aristocratic prosperity and predominance, a new class was growing

up, nourishing new ideas, not yet expressed, and preparing a social revolution of high import for the future of European civilization. If commerce was not yet enriching the poor, it was forming a middle-class of merchants and skilled workmen. Doubtless in every town of Italy many well-to-do commercial families might have been found. At Assisi resided one such family, into whose interior life we can still penetrate with some clearness of vision. The father, Pietro Bernardone by name, was of Lucca descent. Lucca was a centre of silk manufacture ; Bernardone was a dealer in goods of that kind. His business used to take him abroad, especially to Provence, where he sold his wares and found a wife. Why an Assisi merchant should go peddling in Provence I cannot say, but so it was. In his Assisi home were bales of goods, which his French wife stayed at home to look after. There, in the year 1181 or 1182, a son was born to him, during his absence, and named John. This John Bernardone was destined to be

come famous, as we shall see, so that many details of his early life have been recorded. He represents the upper middle-class of the day. His father was rich as times went. The boy learnt two languages, Latin and French, was something of a poet, grew up to be a captivating youth, and associated with the young nobles of his city, even taking a leading place amongst them. Inspirer of revels and first in every frolic, he shines out upon us from his earliest days a brightly animated creature, a captivator of hearts.

Such prominent merchant families tended to associate with the nobles, but there must have been plenty of tradesmen and artisans less well-to-do. These tended to form a class, opposed in spirit to the aristocracy, taking no share in their sports, and not sympathising with their endless feuds; for the family and local feuds, that were the great fun of that day to the parties that fought in them, must have been very distasteful to artisans and traders. Amongst such folk, and even

amongst the poor, the new spirit was spreading. Workmen united in the cities into new guilds. All sorts of new ideas, termed heresies, found expression and received support from more or less loosely organised bodies of men. Petrus Waldus was only one of many innovators, who came to grief in contact with the established order. It was a fine turmoil of a world, big with new issues to be fought out, big with possibilities, abounding in hope and courage, abounding also in misery and despair.

To this world of keen town life, of growing activity and waxing wealth, of rich young knights fighting for sport, of passionate rivalries, of aristocratic dominance and commercial pushing, a world too of sad human hearts, of grinding poverty, of disease and manifold death, of discontent with old ideals, of aspiration toward a better future, a world for all its shouting practically dumb, for all its peering out into the darkness practically blind—came suddenly, at the most unexpected place, that flaming, start-

ling, over-powering apparition — Francis of Assisi.*

Upon the people sitting in darkness he burst — effulgent, coruscating, bewitching, like the arctic aurora. To them he seemed fire of heaven and brightness of the splendour of God. The mediæval imagination surrounded the divinity with nine spheres of angelic hierarchies. Outmost were angels and archangels. Then “Thrones, Dominations, Prinedoms, Virtues, Powers.” Finally, Cherubim, embodying the love of God, and, inmost of all, Seraphim, the ineffable glory

* Francis of Assisi was born 1181 or 1182, son of Pietro Bernardone and Madonna Pica, his wife. He was named John and nicknamed Francis, the Frenchman, because he spoke French. 1206 was the year of his Conversion and Renunciation. 1209, he restored the Portiuncula. 1210, he and eleven followers applied to Innocent III. and obtained leave to preach. He returned to Assisi and settled at Rivotorto, then moved to the Portiuncula. This became the centre of his growing order. The rest of his life was spent in wandering and preaching. 1212, Conversion of St. Clare and foundation of the order of “Poor Clares.” 1213, Clares settle at St. Damiano. 1218, Brother Elias sent to the East. 1219, mission sent to Hungary. 1219 or 1220 Francis went to Egypt and had an interview with Sultan Alkamil (A. H. 615—635). 1221, great assemblage of Franciscans at the Portiuncula; Francis resigned generalship of the order. 1223, Bull of Honorius III. formally approving Francis’ rule. 1224, Vision on Mount Alvernia, the foundation of the “stigmata” legend; 4 Oct. 1226, Francis died at the Portiuncula; 16 July, 1228, Canonised on the day of the foundation of the Church of St. Francis at Assisi.

of his immediate presence. The people of the thirteenth century expressed their sense of the rare personality of Francis, by describing him as a seraph, lent to this poor world for a brief space, a tongue of flame floated down from the central glory of the Most High. Seldom, indeed, has so pure and fair a soul, in flight from heaven to heaven, lit upon our earth a while and wakened it with such celestial praise. By common agreement of men of all subsequent generations and schools of thought, Francis of Assisi is numbered among the world's greatest men. He belongs, moreover, to the very few, whom posterity loves and will remember with affection when the names of men it has feared, followed, and obeyed have passed into oblivion.

The reputation of most great men is based upon what they did, of some upon what they thought and said, but the reputation of Francis rests upon what he was, the life he led, the fascinating personality that his life revealed. Coming when he did he was a saint, but he possessed other than merely saintly qualities,

which, thank Heaven ! are not so rare in any age. He united a strong practical capacity to a nature intensely ideal and an artistic creative disposition. He was a born leader of men. His was essentially a taking personality. He could get his own way. He was a man hard to deny. He inherited the light-heartedness of the Provençals, and was endowed also with their eloquence. He could fire men's minds with his ideals—the love of God, of Nature, and of Mankind. “God's Minstrel” they called him, *Jongleur de Dieu*. With true artistic instinct he moulded his own life into a perfect unity. From the day of his Renunciation to the day of his death, we do not hear of a single word or action of his, out of harmony with the singleness and purity of his main idea. The old hierarchies at first looked askance at him, and bade him in his rags and filth go herd with swine ; but the people accepted him at once, God's poor, and even the hierarchies could not long resist his potent charm. Christ-like in life, more than any other man, he was

Christ-like in effect. His power did not die with him. The multitude of legends that gathered about him enable us to judge of the kind of impression he made upon the people of his day. He seemed to them more than a mere man. There was a moment when he might have been proclaimed a reincarnation of the divinity. Nothing but good statesmanship avoided that calamity.

Most of the great men of the thirteenth century are names and little more. Francis is a man of flesh and blood, so intimately known to us that we can love him. People who came in contact with him went away and wrote down their impressions. It was an unusual thing to do in those days, but in Francis' case it was frequently done. His portrait, even, was painted. Several lives of him exist written by his contemporary followers. They present likenesses of a figure in all cases recognisably the same. His very words are sometimes reported with evident verbatim accuracy, though unfortunately they only afford us another instance of how little the reported

word may carry with it of the effect of the word spoken. Francis was powerful as a speaker, but his influence was based upon his actions. He began by doing: he preached afterwards because he could not help it. At a critical moment the Gospel message came to him: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves." He obeyed literally. He abandoned himself to utter poverty and went to dwell with the outcast lepers of Assisi and to care for them. It was this forthright and downright obedience to spiritual prompting that made men look to him at once, and prepared them to hearken to his words. When John, son of Bernardone, whom they had known gayest among the gay, appeared in the heyday of his young manhood, as Francis, frequenter of lepers, who could choose but wonder? His action drew men to him. He did not seek followers. They sought him. He did not in-

tend to found an order. The order formed itself about him and he was forced to provide it with a Rule. Its members came to do what he did, to live his life. What he desired to do was to obey the orders of Christ and to be helpful to men. The old monastic orders had been concerned with saving their own souls. To this end they retired from the world and gave themselves up to prayer. The new order was concerned to save the souls of others. Its members therefore frequented the busy haunts of men and became preachers.

The world of Francis' own day thought of him chiefly as a preacher. Years of ascetic life spoiled his looks. His garments were dirty, his person mean, his face not handsome,* but God gave his words unheard-of power; such is the record of one who heard him. He said of himself, "I am small of stature and black (*statura pusillus nigerque*). Thomas of Celano, who minutely describes his appearance, says that his voice was "power-

* " *Sordidus erat habitus ejus, persona contemptibilis, et facies indecora* "—(Thomas Spalatensis).

ful, sweet, clear, and resonant." What, however, struck everyone was the winningness of his personality, which appealed alike to the individual, and the crowd. Men who came in contact with him liked to stay near him, and wanted to place themselves under his orders.

As a preacher he was natural, rich in illustration, apt narrative, and simile. He said what came to him at the moment. Once only do we hear of his carefully preparing a sermon and committing it to memory. It was when he was to preach before Pope and Cardinals, and the welfare of his order required that he should produce a good impression on them. His patron, Ugolino, Bishop of Ostia (afterward the Pope Gregory IX., by whom Francis was canonised), had arranged the meeting. I quote the account of what happened from Miss Lina Duff Gordon's excellent book on Assisi: "When the slight, grey figure, the dust of the Umbrian roads still clinging to his sandals, stood up in the spacious hall of the Lateran before Honorius and the venerable

cardinals, Ugolino watched with anxious eyes the course of events. In mortal fear 'he supplicated God with all his being that the simplicity of the holy man should not become an object of ridicule,' and resigning himself to Providence he waited. There was a moment of suspense, of awful silence, for Francis had completely forgotten the sermon he had so carefully learned by heart. But his humility befriended him ; stepping forward a few paces with a gesture of regret he quietly confessed what had happened, and then, as if indeed inspired, he broke forth into one of his most eloquent sermons. 'He preached with such fervour,' says Celano, 'that being unable to contain himself for joy whilst proclaiming the Word of God, he moved even his feet in the manner of one dancing, not for play, but driven thereto by the strength of the Divine love that burnt within him ; therefore he incited none to laughter, but drew tears of sorrow from all.' "

Francis' love of nature, and animals, of the "whole creation," brings him very close to

the modern heart. Wild animals were not afraid of him. Birds fluttered close about him, as they did about Georges Sand, settling on her pen as she sat writing out of doors. Who does not know the tale of the falcon who used to sit "tamely by him," and to awaken him early to prayer? or of the terrible wolf of Agobio, who "came gently as a lamb and lay him down at the feet of St. Francis," and "with movements of body, tail and eyes, and by bending of his head, gave sign of his assent to what St. Francis said"? or of the wild turtle-doves that were being carried to market, which Francis liberated, saying, "O my sisters, simple-minded turtle-doves, innocent and chaste, why have ye let yourselves be caught? Now would I fain deliver you from death and make you nests, that ye may be fruitful and multiply, according to the commandments of your Creator."

Who does not remember that charming story of how St. Francis once, going on his way in happy mood, beheld a number of birds in a tree, whereat he bade his com-

panions wait while he went aside and preached “ to his little sisters, the birds.” They fluttered down around him while he is reported to have spoken in this wise : “ My little sisters, much bounden are ye unto God, your Creator, and alway in every place ought ye to praise Him, for that He hath given you liberty to fly about everywhere, and hath also given you double and triple rayment. Still more are ye behoden to Him for the element of the air which He hath appointed for you ; beyond all this, you sow not, neither do you reap, and God feedeth you, and giveth you the streams and fountains for your drink, the mountains and the valleys for your refuge, and the high trees whereon to make your nests ; and because you know not how to spin or sew, God clotheth you, you and your children ; wherefore your Creator loveth you much, seeing that He hath bestowed on you so many benefits ; and therefore, my little sisters, beware of the sin of ingratitude and study always to give praises unto God.”

It was, I think, love of wild nature as much

as desire of privacy that impelled Francis from time to time to betake himself to remote solitudes in the hills, or uninhabited islands in the midst of a lake. There he abode awhile and communed with God and his own heart. Many beautiful spots, well worth seeking out, are thus associated with his memory. Most beautiful of all his recorded utterances, as showing the intimacy of his affection for all the works of God, are his "Lauds of the Sun," wherein he speaks of "Brother Sun, my lord, that doth illumine us with the dawning of the day. Fair is he and bright, and the brightness of his glory doth signify Thee, O Thou most highest; of sister Moon and the stars that Thou hast shapen in the heavens, bright and precious and comely; of brother Wind and the Air, and of the Clouds and the blue Sky, and of all the times of the sky whereby Thou dost make provision for Thy creatures; of sister Water, for manifold is her use, and humble is she and precious and chaste; of brother Fire, by whom Thou dost lighten our darkness: Fair is he and jocund and most

robust and strong ; of sister Earth our mother that doth cherish us and hath us in keeping, and doth bring forth fruit in abundance and flowers of many colours and grass ; ” and finally even of “ Sister Death ”—upon all of whom he calls to praise the Lord.

In these and many similar utterances there speaks a new voice, the voice of the modern world. The poetry of Francis differed widely from that of the court poets of the day. They sang of love ; and, if of spring too, it was of spring as the happy time for lovers. Francis sang the love of God and praised all times and seasons as appropriate to that. Other Franciscan poets followed him, Fra Pacifico, for instance, who was troubadour before he became friar ; Thomas of Celano, too, probable author of the famous hymn, thoroughly Franciscan in spirit, “ *Dies iræ, dies illa* ” ; Giacomino da Verona also ; and, more important than all in literary history, Giacopone da Todi.

As a preacher, Francis was likewise original. He brought nature into his sermons. He was

dramatic. He told the story of Christ Jesus, and made its incidents visible and credible as actual facts to his hearers. The Byzantine Christ had been a heavenly King far aloof from men. Christ, as Francis spoke of him, became a man, the Virgin a woman. This Franciscan method of exposition is well exhibited in the beautiful *Meditationes Vitæ Christi*, which are ascribed, though perhaps incorrectly, to Saint Bonaventura. We shall presently see how powerful an effect upon Art was wrought by the Franciscan school of preachers.

One of the crying needs of the day was preaching. Francis and his followers supplied that need. What they had to say was what the multitude wanted to hear. The time was ripe for a society of preachers. Wherever Francis went, crowds gathered to hear him. It was the same with his great follower, Anthony of Padua. A congregation estimated at thirty thousand in number assembled to listen to him outside the walls of Padua. Less eloquent Franciscans gathered doubtless

smaller audiences, but all over Italy they preached and were listened to, especially by the common people of the towns. The nobles seem to have been less impressed. At Perugia, for instance, Brother Leo relates that once, when Francis was preaching in the Piazza, the knights careered through it on their horses, and played with their arms, to the hindering of his preaching, nor would they desist when asked. Thereupon Francis addressing them said :—

“ The Lord hath exalted you above all your neighbours, and therefore ought you the more willingly to acknowledge your Creator by humbling you, not unto God alone, but likewise unto your neighbours. But your heart is lifted up in pride, and you do waste your neighbours, and slay many ; wherefore I say unto you that, save you be quickly converted unto God and do make satisfaction of those things wherein you have offended, the Lord which leaveth nought unpunished, to soror vengeance upon you and to your punishment and to your shame, shall make you rise up

one against another ; and in the sedition that shall be raised and in civil war, so great tribulation shall you suffer as never could your neighbours wreak upon you."

This utterance is significant, expressing as it does the conscious divergence between the old knightly ideal and those of the new industrial class. The Franciscan order and the industrial class were of one mind. In Francis and his followers, the new tendencies found a voice. The industrial class and the Franciscan order grew up together. Before Francis had been dead twenty years there was hardly a city in Italy without a Franciscan convent. So rapidly did they increase in size, moreover, that several of them had to be rebuilt or enlarged more than once before the end of the thirteenth century. You never hear of a Franciscan convent in the country ; all are in towns. The Minorite Friars were essentially a town order. Their work was in towns. Their numbers were chiefly recruited from town-folk. It was the towns that supplied, by multitudes of small subscriptions, the money

requisite to the building and support of their churches and convents. Francis himself had wished that his followers should devote themselves absolutely to poverty. Neither individually nor collectively were they to own property. Their convents were to consist of a number of little mud and wood huts, built on a patch of ground, lent or rented for that purpose. Their churches were to be mean and destitute of decoration. In fact, church and convent were to resemble St. Mary's of the Little Plot near Assisi, such as it was when Francis died there in 1226.

In this and many other respects, however, Francis' wishes were not attended to. When he died the order came under the control of the masterful, capable, and ambitious Brother Elias, who recognised that so ideal an institution could not long last. In the hands of Elias and a group of similarly minded men, the simple life of Francis became enshrined in a series of miraculous legends, culminating in that of the Stigmata. His body was buried in a great church built and splendidly deco-

rated in his honour. His simple order of poor unlearned preachers became possessed of a number of splendid convents and great churches, not only throughout Italy, but all over Europe. The fact that money was forthcoming for all this work, and to support the crowd of Franciscans that so rapidly increased in number, is proof that the order thus modified met some real needs of the day.

When we come to consider these Franciscan churches, we shall find the Church of Santa Croce at Florence to be typical of them. It was not a mere coincidence that, in the year 1250, the merchants and tradesmen of Florence, before marching to the palace of the Podesta to upset the old aristocratic government of their city and establish a new popular, or rather commercial government, assembled in the square of Sta. Croce. Amongst the many broils and tumults of mediæval Italian cities, one revolution reads rather like another. But this Florentine revolution of 1250 was a turning point in the city's history. It marked the coming to power of the new men—the

industrial class. It marked the close of the purely aristocratic epoch. It presently involved an artistic revolution also. With the new governing class came a new spirit, producing a new artistic ideal. How far the Franciscans of Florence were instrumental in stirring up the revolution we cannot say. That they must have sympathised with it is certain. Churchmen before Francis' time had been allied to the old gentry and had sprung from their caste. The new friars were of the people and soon found themselves in opposition to the old clergy. The people deserted the cathedrals and parish churches for the churches of the friars. Naturally, the established clergy did not like it; they suffered, not merely in prestige, but in purse. The Papacy, by good luck or profound foresight, had attached the friars to itself. A political fact of more importance for the time can scarcely be indicated. The results of the alliance were far reaching and of long continuance. Thus it came about that the Guelphs, the party of the Pope, were likewise the popular party.

The Ghibellines, the party of the Emperor, were the aristocratic party. The Guelphs were political reformers, the Ghibellines conservatives. We shall find the distinction manifested in the arts of the time. Where the Guelphs controlled the Art-Fund we shall find the new style of Art preferred ; where the Art-Fund is controlled by the Ghibellines we shall find the transition more¹ gradual.

Bear in mind that neither Florence nor any city of Italy took the lead in the new political development. It was in the North of Europe, in France and England, that the commercial classes first obtained control of the towns. It was also in France (and soon afterwards in England) that the new artistic tendencies took form, and were soonest and best expressed, in the style we call Gothic. You will everywhere, I think, find Gothic architecture (in its early stages) to be the indication of the coming of the new popular commercial class to a position of power, or at least influence. The introduction of Gothic Art into Italy was, at all events, synchronous with the popular movement.

Modern times afford an analogy, which, however, must not be pressed too far. The French revolutionary movement affected a large part of Europe and was warmly approved in the United States. England stood outside of it. Where the French armies reached, or where French ideas obtained acceptance, the French style of architecture and many other French fashions and methods spread. Those who looked up to Paris as leading the world were ready to imitate the ways and fashions of Paris. A comparison between the domestic and street architecture of London and New York to-day manifests the different tendencies of the people of the two cities in this respect. Of course, nowadays other forces are in the ascendant; I am speaking of the effect produced by work done and traditions established up to half a century ago.

Nothing was more natural than that the new popular mendicant orders and guild-governments in Italy should look to France for fashions in Art, as well as for political influences. France in return welcomed the Fran-

ciscans. It seems clear that St. Louis was of a Franciscan cast of mind. Legend says that he and Francis met in a romantic fashion. They may have done so ; at all events, their ideas were of similar quality. It is thus not surprising that most of the early Franciscan churches were built in the foreign Gothic style, more or less weakly apprehended by local architects.

The first erected Franciscan church of importance that still exists was built to contain the body, enshrine the memory, and proclaim the glory of St. Francis himself. The first stone of it was laid two years after Francis' death, by Pope Gregory IX., who had been his friend, and who came to Assisi to pronounce his canonization. Owing to the accident of the site on which it is built, it is an exceptional edifice, consisting of two churches, one exactly on the top of the other—a two-storeyed church. The lower is round-arched and vaulted ; the upper is in the pointed style. We need not pause over this architecture of Franciscan Assisi, because it is in no sense first-rate.

Lovers of Art go to Assisi not to study architecture but painting, and to that we shall presently return.

The Franciscan churches in the large towns had a different purpose from the Church of St. Francis at Assisi. That was a monument and place of pilgrimage. They were churches of daily resort, places for the assembly of large congregations, primarily preaching places. At first, therefore, the mendicant friars, both Franciscan and Dominican, did not need splendid churches, but large ones, unencumbered by massive pillars, so that a crowded congregation might see and hear in them. The friars' churches, therefore, were generally built of brick, where brick was cheapest. They were often roofed with wood rather than vaulted with stone. The old Romanesque style was not suited to them; the new Gothic was easy of adaptation to the requirements of their plan.

The right which the mendicant orders obtained to bury the dead within their convents has to be remembered. It enabled the friars to grant to the families of their wealthy sup-

porters permission to erect family chapels in their churches. The long row of chapels at the east end of Santa Croce and around its transepts is thus accounted for. They are not popularly known as the chapel of this or the other saint, but of such and such a family —the Bardi, the Peruzzi, and so forth. The owners of these chapels hastened to decorate them with painting or sculpture, perhaps not unmoved by rivalry one with another; or they set up fine altars and altar-pieces within them. The communities of friars were not backward in raising funds for the decoration of the body of the church and the chief halls and cloisters of the convent.

Bear in mind that the buildings themselves were for the most part of brick, and lacked structural magnificence. Compare the interior of Santa Croce with that, say, of the Cathedral of Pisa—the difference is immediately manifest. The decoration of a plain building must be applied decoration. It might have consisted of mosaics and fine marbles, as in the interior of St. Mark's, but that would have been

too slow and costly a process. Moreover, the old style of design associated with mosaic was not popular. Something more direct, more readily understandable, was needed. The day for Byzantine symbolism was done. Francis and his followers had supplanted symbolism by fact. What their congregations were interested in were the New Testament story and the lives of the saints. They wanted to see pictures of the life of Christ, the doings, adventures, and martyrdoms of the saints. They wanted pictures, pictures they could understand, and plenty of them. Thus a great demand for anecdotal fresco painting arose. It matched the taste of the day and the opportunity afforded by these many large new buildings. How that demand was supplied and the effect it produced upon Italian Art is a subject to which our attention must presently be turned.

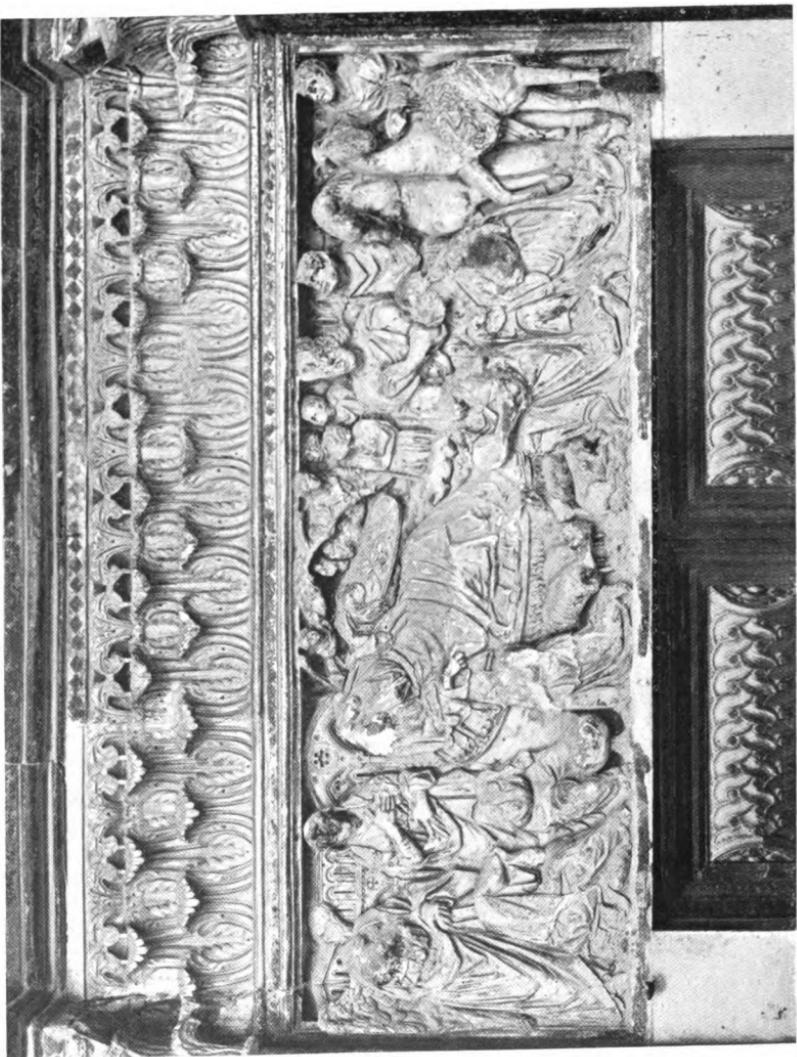
But first let us briefly consider the progress of the contemporary school of Tuscan sculpture during this interesting transitional period. We have already studied the pulpit which Niccolo

Pisano made for the Pisan Baptistery in 1260, ten years after the Florentine revolution and thirty-four years after the death of Francis. We saw that it was a work done under the control of the aristocratic ideal in the old classical style. It is remarkable, indeed, as indicative of the popularity of preaching, that this and other pulpits should have been made with so much elaboration about this period. But I doubt whether Niccolo's pulpit was placed at the disposal of a Franciscan friar for many years after its erection. It is far better suited to be the platform of a formal episcopal communication than of an impassioned popular orator.

After the completion of this pulpit Niccolo may have worked for the Dominican friars at Bologna. He was then commissioned to make a pulpit for the Cathedral of Siena, with the assistance of his son Giovanni, and his pupils Arnolfo di Cambio, Donato, and Lapo. This pulpit is believed to have been finished in about three years ; if so, it must have been the work of many hands. An ex-

amination of the work, as it now stands in the Cathedral, shows a great change in style from that of the pulpit in the Pisan Baptistry. We find no more Juno-Madonnas or imperious angels; no more prominent imitation of classical, still less of Byzantine models. The spirits that animate the whole are Gothic-French and of the new naturalism. We may hunt through the contemporary Italian paintings and find no such change yet for some years. It was sculpture that, next after architecture, felt the new influences and yielded to them.

The Siena pulpit is larger, more elaborate, and less beautiful than the Pisan. Artistically it does not show development but decadence. Yet it manifests the presence of new qualities destined one day to produce fine results. At present the new element was mainly active as a destroying agency, driving the old style out. We notice at once the overcrowding of the panels with figures, and the relative fussiness of the whole design. Yet in the details there is much to rouse interest and admiration.



Altanari, Photo.
N. Pisano.

ADORATION OF THE MAGI.
Lucca Cathedral.

Faces and figures are studied from nature. They are fuller of expression and character. Subtle emotions are displayed. The expression of Elizabeth's face in the Visitation, the grief of the mothers in the Massacre of the Innocents, the weeping friends at the foot of the Cross—all are well rendered; whilst, among the blessed and damned that throng the Last Judgment panels, types of many characters and emotions are skilfully imagined and portrayed. In details of architecture introduced into the backgrounds we find examples of the Gothic style, as indeed we find it, though there mixed with Romanesque, in the reliefs over the left door in the West façade of the Cathedral of Lucca, which may be of about this date.

The new spirit which Niccolo in his old age thus brought into Tuscan Sculpture found further expression in the work of his pupil, Arnolfo di Cambio (b. circa 1232, d. 1310), and of his own son, Giovanni Pisano (b. circa 1245, d. 1320). Arnolfo designed the Church of Santa Croce which now exists,

replacing an older edifice. He likewise designed the Cathedral of Florence, both in the Tuscan Gothic style. His most important independent work of sculpture was the monument of Cardinal de Braye in the Church of S. Domenico at Orvieto, dated 1280. That likewise is completely Gothic. This monument was imitated by many sculptors ; its design may be found repeated with various modifications all over Europe.* A broad base supports a sarcophagus on which lies the full-length figure of the dead. Two angels draw aside curtains from before it. A high canopy covers the whole. Figures of the Virgin and Child and of the Cardinal,

* The following monuments, having angels drawing curtains, may be mentioned :—

Bishop of Mende (ob. 1296), by J. Cosmas, in S. M. supra Minerva, Rome.

Cardinal Roderigo Gonsalvo (ob. 1299), by J. Cosmas, in S. M. Maggiore, Rome.

Pope Benedict XI. (1305), by Giovanni Pisano, in S. Domenico, Perugia. S. Margaret, in S. Margaret's at Cortona.

Bishop Guido Tarlati, in the Duomo at Arezzo.

A Bishop (XIV. Cent.) in the Cathedral at Limoges.

Several tombs in the churches of the Frari and SS. John and Paul at Venice.

Several tombs at Verona.

In England and Germany other examples might be quoted.

being presented to them by his patron saint, occupy niches in the wall over the sarcophagus. The whole is beautifully proportioned, and embellished with charming decorative mosaic, torse columns, and delicate carving, without superfluity or extravagance.

Amongst sepulchral monuments those of this type occupy an almost central position. Earlier Christian sculptors scarcely indicated—many of them were unable to indicate—whether the effigy represented a man alive or dead. The men of the best period sculpture the dead as in a deep sleep. When the decadence sets in, every kind of extravagance appears, yet varying between two extremes—in one the dead is exhibited ghastly with the horrors of decay ; in the other he swaggers in his best clothes, sleek, periwigged, and pompous. Arnolfo's tomb and Giovanni Pisano's at Perugia hold the just mean between these two extremes. There is no horror of death about the dead, but “after life's fitful fever he sleeps well” ; no hope or fear of his awakening. Every curve and fold of the

drooping garments expresses the idea of repose. The thought is as temperate, as measured and reserved, as is the simple architecture and sculpture that fitly expresses it.

The chief charm in Italian Gothic is usually to be found in the sculpture rather than the architecture. Niccolo Pisano, Arnolfo, and Giovanni Pisano were all architects, yet it is as sculptors that they are best remembered. Giovanni, in some of his works, such as a Madonna in the Campo Santo at Pisa (if, indeed, it be by him), shows himself mastered by French Gothic forms. His single Madonna figures are usually of the French type, imitated perhaps from some French ivory carving. There is no reason to suppose that he was ever in France. The new style was spreading everywhere, and it would have been difficult for him to escape its influence.

Giovanni, like his father, was employed to make stately pulpits, one for Pistoja (in 1301), a larger one for the Cathedral of Pisa (1302—1311). This latter was his most elaborate work in sculpture. It has been removed from



Altanari, Photo.

Giovanni Pisano.

CATHEDRAL PULPIT.

Pisa.

Facing page 83.

its place and dismembered, but there are hopes that it will soon be put together again in the Pisa Museum. At present it can be studied best in the cast of it at South Kensington. A glance shows that this pulpit and Niccolo's first belong to different epochs of art. In Niccolo's the architecture rules ; the decoration is subordinate. In Giovanni's the sculpture is everything, the architecture unimportant. The central column on which the body of the pulpit rests is formed of the three Christian Graces ; they stand on a base panelled with the seven Liberal Arts. Two of the other six columns are plain, resting on lions. Of the remaining four, two are replaced by figures of Christ and the town of Pisa, suckling her young and guarded by an eagle ; the other two by symbolical representations of the spiritual and physical natures, under the guise of the Archangel Michael and Hercules. Pisa stands on the Four Cardinal Virtues. Over the capitals are the Sybils ; in the spandrels of the arches are the Prophets ; round the breast-work are panels telling the story of the birth

and death of Christ. In fact, every part is carved. Figures, instead of columns, support the capitals ; there are groups of figures for bases. The architecture is smothered in sculpture. We have come into an anecdotic and a preaching age. Every feature must now tell a tale or utter a sermon. From the point of view of Art the result is disastrous. There are plentiful suggestions of fair thought—ideas enough ; but grace, dignity, repose, are sacrificed to them.

Compare the panel representing the Adoration of the Magi with the corresponding panel on Niccolo's first pulpit. The newer work is more intelligible and less decorative than the old. The figures are of a new type, not clothed in classical robes. They make no attempt to look dignified ; they are simply human. In Niccolo's the forms are simple, the attitudes dignified, the figures noble. The Virgin is upright and queenly, the Kings courteous and royal, the horses fine as the sculptor could make them. In Giovanni's there is neither nobility of form nor grace of arrangement.



Altinari, Photo.

N. Pisano.

NATIVITY.
Baptistery Pulpit, Pisa.



Altinari, Photo.

G. Pisano.

NATIVITY.
Cathedral Pulpit, Pisa.

The figures are patched together rather than grouped ; yet they tell their story with a novel lucidity. All that Niccolo has to say is that three kings dismounted from their chargers and knelt before an Empress and her child. Giovanni has a whole history to recount. He takes you first into a cave where the Magi are asleep and an angel appears to them and smites them with wonder. He shows you their cavalcade of camels, horses, and dogs. He shows you how glad they are when they reach their goal—a mere cave though it be, and no queen awaiting them in courtly splendour, but only a very slim woman with the tiniest of babies. Then you see how the Kings dismount, and one runs eagerly in, and, falling upon his knees, kisses just the very tip of the toe of the babe ; and another king is so overcome with awe that he dare not enter till an angel presses him forward and gives him courage. Giovanni thus subordinated form to fact. He abandoned traditional treatment in the endeavour to make his work vital. Lovers of Art will prefer the older method ; lovers of

the Christian story will prefer the new. Francis had made the people of the last part of the thirteenth century lovers of the Christian story ; they therefore delighted in the new treatment. Thenceforward artists had to abandon the old when they were working for the new men.

At Orvieto both Arnolfo and other architects and sculptors of the Pisan school were successively employed on the new Cathedral building there. Let us, in conclusion, turn our attention for a moment to some of the sculpture belonging to the Pisan school with which the façade is decorated. On one pier is a notable representation of the Last Judgment, probably designed by Arnolfo, but doubtless modernized in execution, a quarter of a century later. It shows the final dominance of the new style. Here a sermon is preached with power indeed. It would be hard to find the terror of damnation and the awfulness of despair more vividly depicted. In their agony the condemned tear their hair and dig their nails into their cheeks. They make no effort to escape or resist. Satan and the fiends have



Altinari, Photo.

THE LAST JUDGMENT. Facade of Orvieto Cathedral.

got them. The angel of God drives them pitilessly away with his scourge of leaded cord. The place to which they must go is a flaming hollow, where serpents glide and sting and hiss among slimy flames, and devils grin upon their agony.

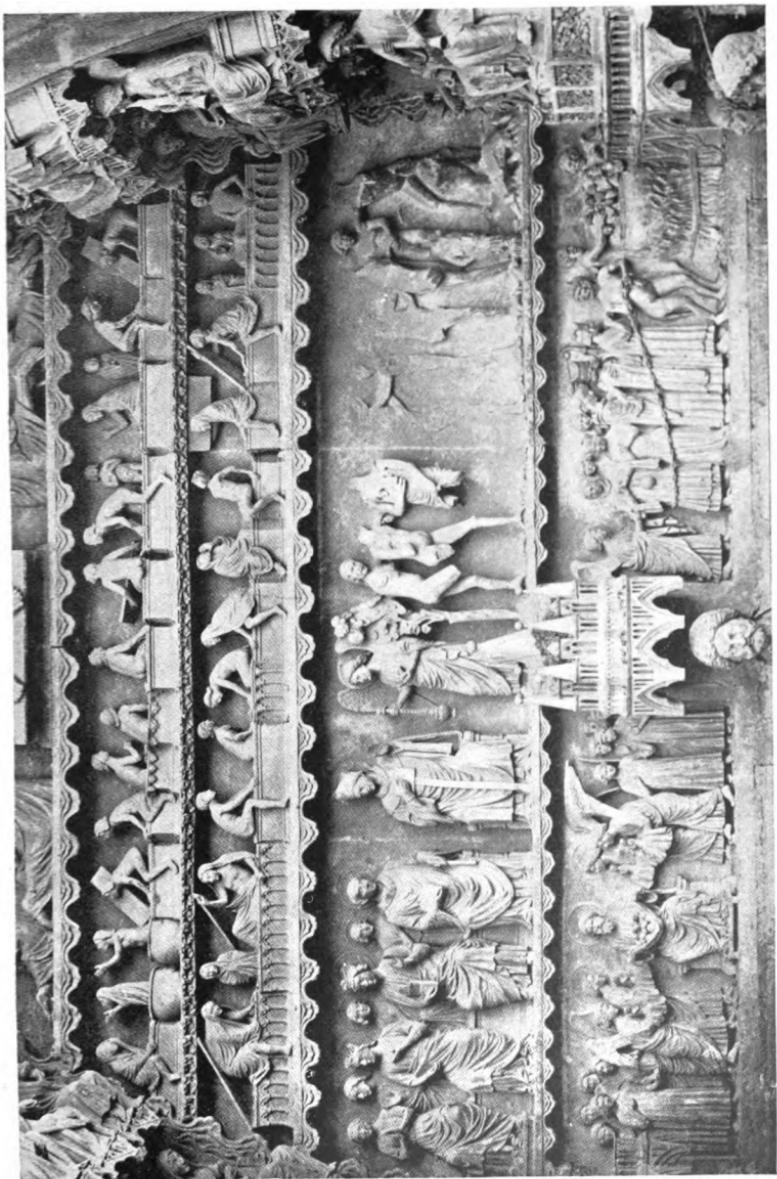
The date of this sculpture is perhaps already as late as 1320. Compare it with the superb sculptured tympanum of the North Transept Portal of Rheims, made almost a century earlier. Evidently Italian sculptors had not yet caught up with the French. But the spirit of the French work is now completely assimilated by the Italians, though they have much to learn before they can attain the beauty of the North, if indeed they will ever attain it.

We hear much of early Italian sculpture, and relatively little of French Gothic sculpture, but the French was far the finer. No sculpture made in Italy till the coming of Donatello, that is to say, till the Italian Gothic period was approaching its end, can compare for excellence with the contemporary sculpture on French Cathedrals; yet the names

of early Italian sculptors are known and honoured ; those of French Gothic sculptors have been forgotten. Bear in mind, however, that throughout the Gothic period it was France, as I have said, that led the way. Italy, during the time of the popular upheaval, followed in the wake of France, and borrowed from the French far more than is generally admitted. Whether Italy was helped or retarded by the Gothic movement is a question not easily answered. Architecturally I think Italy was retarded. Gothic architecture never took firm root in Italian soil. It was a foreign growth, fundamentally unsuited to the Italian mind, the Italian climate, and Italian building materials. Italy is a country of marble ; France of softer and coarser stone. If France had possessed in some central position the marble quarries of Carrara, French architecture would have been different from what it was, for an architectural style is the product of a number of factors uniting at a given time and place.

If Italian artists had been enabled to con-

THE RESURRECTION.



tinue the development of their style without break from the architecture of San Miniato at Florence, from the sculpture of Niccolo's first pulpit, from the painting of Cimabue's great Madonnas, it seems probable that they would sooner and more directly have attained to the noble and complete power for which they had to wait two centuries. When they did attain it, they did so by abandoning the Gothic tradition, and returning to study and imitation of the very same models that Niccolo had employed. Then, before many decades had passed, they formed a style of their own and produced works full of the national spirit, which in their turn far surpassed the works of Northern artists. Thenceforward they were not the pupils, but the teachers of the French. Had the Italians, at the end of the thirteenth century, been true to themselves and to their own national traditions, the second and great Renaissance might have arisen two centuries sooner than it did.

The student of history can hardly help making such imaginary pictures of what might

have been. But the thing that actually was never happened by chance. Art, at any rate, is not the expression of any accidental whim of a personality. It expresses the tone of a society. The Art of any day is what it is because the national or local life of the day is what it is. A finer Art might conceivably have existed at a given date, if the forces of civilization had been different: but different they could not be. The civilization of a moment is the resultant of all the human and external forces then acting. Francis did not change the face of Italy. He was himself the product of the forces that were operating to effect that change. He was the voice of the day. He expressed its aspirations and ideals. We behold in him the feelings and tendencies that existed in the contemporary multitude. He was great in the eyes of men because of the exactness with which he matched his day. Coming at another time he would have been equally great, but might have lived and died unrecognized.

The unrecognized great of any age—who

shall say how many they are, or how pathetic is their silent lot—the men with ideals outworn or too advanced for their own day? Is it good fortune that produces the man to match his time? Is it merely the operation of the law of averages? To this question History, alas! supplies no answer, and Science has not discovered one. It is the mysterious unsolved problem of Great Men.

CHAPTER III.

GIOTTO.

IN previous chapters we have seen what was the character of Italian Art at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and we have observed the effect of the great popular movement, associated with the name of Francis of Assisi, in altering the national ideal, and consequently the style of Central Italian Architecture and Sculpture. We have now to study the effect produced upon Painting by the same movement. We have seen that the first important building in the new style was the church and convent of St. Francis at Assisi, founded in the year 1228. It was not till some forty years later that the new tendencies found expression in sculpture. We have to wait almost another quarter of a century

before they appear in painting. This slowness of reaction in painting is easily explained when we observe how much more strongly under the dominion of Byzantine and classical traditions, was that and the kindred art of Mosaic, than either Architecture or Sculpture.

The interiors of the churches of St. Francis at Assisi were incomplete until they had been entirely covered with coloured decoration. They were designed to be so decorated. The Lower Church, with its dim light and cavernous vaulting is better suited for mosaic than fresco, but mosaic was too costly and slow a system. The Upper Church was obviously intended from the first to be frescoed. At the present day the whole of both these churches is overlaid with colour from end to end and in every part. The frescoes it contains form a series completely illustrating the history of Italian painting for one hundred years.

The principal dates connected with the church are these: It was founded in 1228. The Lower Church was completed and the body of the Saint translated into it in 1230.

The Upper Church was roofed in, with its stone vault, in 1236, and finished in 1253. So long as costly building operations were in progress it is unlikely that much money was spent on paintings. We know, indeed, that in 1236 Giunta of Pisa painted a crucifix for the Friars, which used to hang in the Upper Church, but is now lost. Tradition says that he likewise painted frescoes. Though we cannot identify them, we know well enough that they must have been works in the old-fashioned style. The Friars had no choice but to employ such artists as the day afforded. They may have dimly felt that they wanted a new type of picture, but they could not paint for themselves, and the existing painters were wedded to the old style.

Perhaps the whole of the Lower Church was painted over before the Upper was taken in hand. Only fragments of the decoration survive in the nave. The transept, if painted then at all, was afterwards repainted, as we now see it, with Cimabue's Madonna spared and all the other pictures replaced by new.

The nave originally consisted of a single aisle with no side chapels. Some time towards the end of the thirteenth century, its massive walls were tunnelled through and side chapels were added between the flying buttresses, themselves an addition to the original design. By this tunnelling process large parts of the nave-frescoes were cut away and the remainder damaged. Time has also dealt hardly with them, so that now, in the dim light which is all that ever reaches them on the brightest day, it is difficult to do more than just discern the fact of their existence. By long and patient study one can discover, on the one side, scenes from the life of Christ, and, on the other, incidents in the Francis legend. They seem to have been well painted for their time, but I was unable to trace in them any evidence of a new artistic tendency. The interesting point to observe is that already, in what may have been the earliest series of wall pictures ordered by the Franciscans, the life of Francis, as parallel to and equally important with the life of Christ, found place.

These, however, were not the first representations of the Francis legend ever painted. There exist pictures, ascribed to Margeritone of Arezzo and the like artists, professing to be portraits of Saint Francis, surrounded or accompanied by incidents from his legend depicted in small compartments. Such pictures demanded fresh invention on the part of the painters, yet we find no new spirit in the work. They seem to me altogether similar in style to other legendary series of the day. Still it is remarkable that from the very beginning Franciscanism should have sought pictorial illustration.

We can go even further back than this. Such was the personal and vital effect of Francis upon his followers that, during his own lifetime, they desired to have portraits of him. In the year 1212, when Francis was at Florence, the Count of Monte Acuto instructed Melormus, who is described as the most famous Greek painter of those days, to watch the holy man when absorbed in prayer, and paint a picture of him. Copies of this picture are

now in the gallery at Pisa and elsewhere. One is in my own possession. Melormus' portrait appears to have been frequently copied, both at that time and later, and it agrees well enough with Thomas of Celano's written description of Francis.

Celano says that "he was of a cheerful countenance and kindly expression, neither shy nor bold. He was rather below middle height, his head of medium size and round ; the face at once long and projecting ; the forehead small and flat ; the eyes of medium size, black, and candid ; the hair black ; the eyebrows straight ; the nose thin, symmetrical, and straight ; the ears small and protruding ; the temples flat. His speech was kindly, yet ardent and incisive ; his voice strong, sweet, clear, and resonant ; his teeth close, regular, and white ; lips well-formed and fine ; beard black and straggly ; neck thin ; shoulders straight ; arms short ; hands delicate ; fingers long, with nails projecting ; legs thin ; feet small ; skin delicate ; and very little flesh."

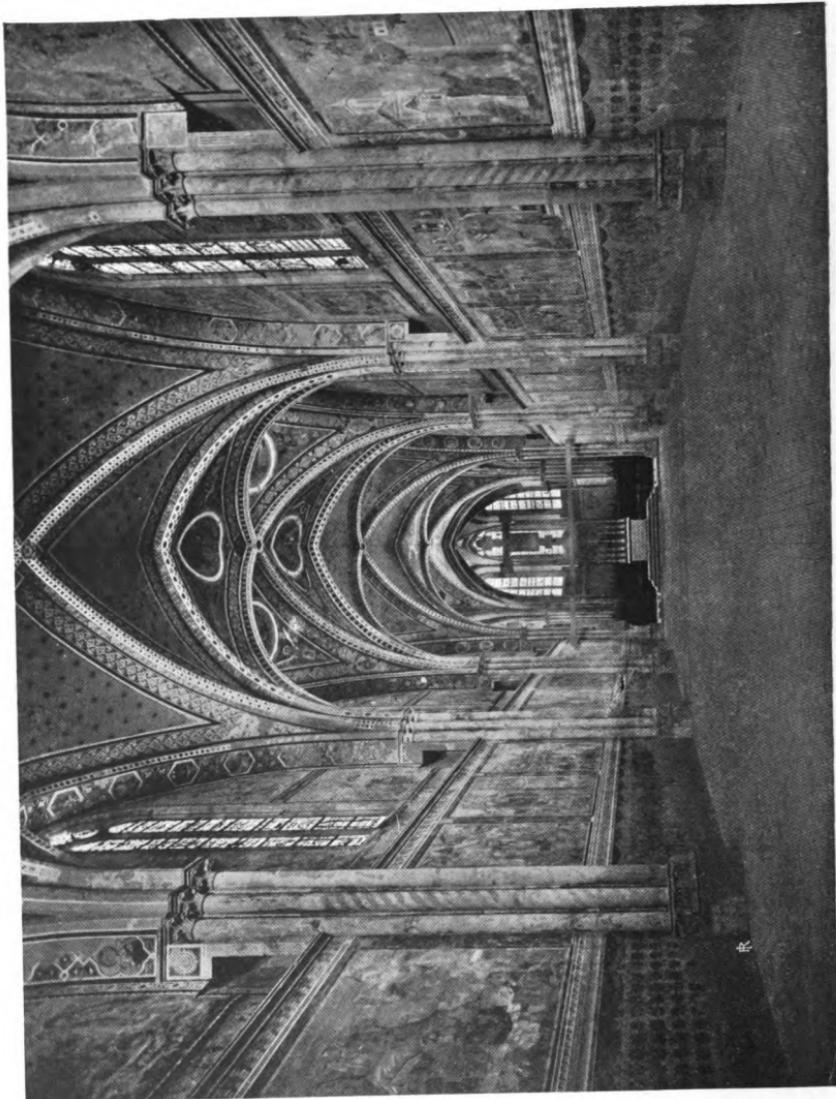
From this description we perceive how much more sensitive to the new requirements of truthful description was Literature than Painting. The spirit, which was ultimately to revolutionize pictorial art, was fully alive in the days of Francis himself ; but more than half-a-century had to pass, before it began to produce effect upon the most conservative of craftsmen at that time.

Mounting to the Upper Church, we are surrounded by a long series of most puzzling pictures. The walls of choir and transept, the whole roof, and the upper parts of the walls of the nave, were once occupied by a number of fresco paintings, now in a terribly decayed condition. Some have wholly fallen from the wall ; some have lost all trace of colour and retain only their outlines sunk into the plaster when it was soft ; in some the colours have gone black ; whilst only a very few, and those high up in positions difficult for study, remain in tolerable preservation.

It seems likely that the painters who worked in the transepts, where the frescoes have most

THE UPPER CHURCH, ASSISI.

Anderson, Photo.



lost colour, were less skilled in the technical process of fresco than those who worked on the walls and roof of the nave, and may therefore belong to an earlier generation. Where the plaster on which the nave frescoes were painted has not bodily fallen from the wall, a catastrophe for which the painters as painters cannot be held responsible, the frescoes have survived in remarkable freshness. This great body of old work has formed subject of study for many of the best art historians, notably of Professors Cavalcasella and Thode, and recently of Messrs. Berenson and Roger Fry. When the condition of the works to be examined is borne in mind, we need not be surprised that these and other authorities are by no means always in agreement as to the authorship of particular frescoes. We shall not be far wrong if we confine ourselves to the general conclusion that the frescoes in the north or right transept are older than those in the south or left, and that it is among the latter that the work of Cimabue is to be sought.

Of the nave frescoes, those on the north side,

representing Old Testament subjects, and some of those in the roof, were painted by artists who affected the old Roman classical tradition ; whilst the remaining parts of the roof and the New Testament subjects on the south wall may be ascribed to followers of Cimabue, or painters impregnated with Byzantine influences. With the best will in the world I can see in none of them any sign of the change that was at hand. There are fine examples of the ancient dignity, as in the majestic angels in the transept-gallery. There are noble compositions among the Old Testament groups ; whilst the great Crucifixion, ascribed to Cimabue, in the south transept, may have possessed all the merits that have been claimed for it. In spirit, however, all these works belong to the old school. My eyes could find no trace in any of them of the Gothic Ideal that was at hand.

If the reader were now standing by me in the nave of the Upper Church, having filled his eyes and memory with all that he could perceive and learn of these older pictures, I

would bid him direct his vision to the lowest series of frescoes that completely surround the nave, and have not thus far been mentioned. There he would behold at a glance the new spirit completely expressed, for this series of pictures of the Francis legend was painted by or under the direction of Giotto, and these are, in my opinion, the earliest works we possess from his hand.

This revolutionizing painter was the son of a simple sheep-farmer. His grandfather and his brother were blacksmiths. He was born in 1266 at his father's house at Colle, in the Commune of Vespignano, near Florence. A fourteenth century anonymous commentator on Dante states that the boy was apprenticed by his father to a Florentine wool-stapler ; but that, having shown some talent for drawing, he was transferred to Cimabue's studio. With Cimabue, perhaps before 1280, he may have gone to Assisi and worked as his apprentice and afterwards as his assistant. Having shown talent and won the confidence of those directing the works, he appears to have been put in

charge of them, when Cimabue returned to Florence somewhere about 1290 and there painted frescoes in San Spirito and Santo Croce. I conclude, therefore, that it was during the nineties that Giotto and his assistants painted the Francis frescoes.

From 1298 to 1300 Giotto worked in Rome ; here he met Dante. Then he probably returned to Assisi for two or three years and painted the four great allegories in the vaulting over the high altar of the Lower Church. About 1303 he went to Padua to fresco the interior of the Arena Chapel, the building of which was finished in that year. In 1306 he was still at Padua and again met Dante. I think he paid a third visit to Assisi after leaving Padua, and then executed the frescoes in the transept of the Lower Church, which seem to me obviously later than the pictures of the same subjects in the Arena Chapel. His beautiful frescoes in the Chapel of Santa Croce in Florence are yet more mature. Giotto was a great wanderer, and painted in several other Italian cities. In 1334 he was appointed Master of

the Works of the cathedral at Florence, for which he designed and commenced building the renowned Campanile. At Florence, in January, 1337, he died.

If it were not recorded that Giotto was Cimabue's pupil we should never have guessed it from the works of the two painters. Indeed, a comparison between the older work and the pictures of the Francis legend reveals contrasts rather than similarities. To sum up in a word the group of new characteristics, we may say that the new work is distinguished by its greater sincerity from the old. So long as the function of painters was to depict a series of symbolical figures, in stately independence one of another, such as we see in the Mosaic decoration of St. Mark's at Venice, or in some of the paintings in the choir at Assisi, the old style was admirably suited for the purpose. In the great angels of the gallery we feel no necessary element lacking. They are admirable works of their kind. The dignified Byzantine Madonnas, the commanding figures of Apostles or Prophets ranged in rows, the

stately Saints—in these, and the like of these, the symbolic element predominated. It is right that they seem aloof from ordinary human life, superhuman if it were possible. But when we come to the representation of events, wherein the human interest, the fact that men and women were engaged, is the chief subject of interest, the old style is inadequate. Byzantine painters treated events, as they did single figures, symbolically ; or if they did not they failed, except in so far as their designs were decorative.

Franciscan communities may have desired decoration, but they wanted veracity more. They wanted pictures of sacred events corresponding in character to the kind of description of those events that would find place in a Franciscan sermon. This was what they did not get from painters till Giotto and his followers supplied it. The Old and New Testament illustrations of the upper parts of the nave-walls manifest very little attempt on the painters' part to conceive a subject as an event that actually took place. For all the violent



Arundel Soc.

Giotto. ST. FRANCIS PREACHING BEFORE POPE HONORIUS III.
Fresco in the Upper Church, Assisi.

Facing page 105.

movement with which some of the figures are endowed, the compositions are lacking in dramatic force. The pictures of the Francis legend, on the contrary, are dramatically conceived. Over and over again the technical resources at the artist's disposal have been insufficient to accomplish a visible embodiment of his conception. But the very failures manifest the effort that was made.

Take, for example, the picture of Francis preaching before Pope Honorius III. and his Cardinals, the occasion when, as we know, Francis danced about with excitement. The artist's endeavour to endow his figure of the Saint with earnestness is obvious, as much as in the bad drawing and awkwardness of the right hand as in anything. He succeeds, however, in conveying an intelligible rendering of the scene. The Pope is there in the midst, visibly a Pope, earnest, attentive, intellectual. His court has to be represented by six men, all posed in simple attitudes, and obviously affected by the speaker's words. It is a simple composition, but as articulate as one

could desire. Observe further that it is not a mere assemblage of figures illustrating a tale, but that it is a good picture, too, a pleasant thing to look at, entirely apart from its meaning. If we knew nothing about Pope, Cardinals, or Francis, we might still look at it with pleasure ; for the figures are charming in themselves and well-grouped, the colour-harmony is delightful, and the decorative accessories of arches, vaulting, and the like are prettily invented and disposed. Moreover, the composition is complete in itself and forms a single whole. You could not remove a figure or cut off a part without spoiling the rest.

Such pictorial unity was not attained by Giotto without effort. The older painters had attained unity of decorative effect ; yet their compositions, regarded as pictures, were often not properly compositions at all, but mere agglomerations of figures. The problem, therefore, which Giotto had to solve for himself, was how at one and the same time to conceive his subject as an event that actually happened,

and on the other hand to make his rendering of it a picture. It was herein that he manifested his sincerity. He almost always succeeds in drawing the dramatic heart out of the situation, by reducing it to its simplest possible form. He concentrates attention on the chief actors and divides the action skilfully among them, making each contribute his share. But in representing the event he never forgets that it is a picture he is painting, and, while satisfying those who merely desired to obtain a set of illustrations of Bonaventura's "Life of St. Francis," his harder effort evidently was to satisfy himself as creator of a work of art.

The two best pictures of the whole series of twenty-eight are those that occupy prominent positions on the end wall of the nave on either side of the great door. They represent the Thirst of Francis' Ass-driver, and St. Francis Preaching to the Birds. In the former the vigorous drinking of the poor man has been praised by Vasari and other writers, though his posture is far from being well drawn. In the latter the composition resembles that of

earlier pictures of the same subject, as in the nave downstairs ; but the sweet sentiment of the legend is here embodied for the first time. Both pictures are, however, specially remarkable for their charming effect as paintings. They are almost monochromes in grey. They are composed with absolute simplicity. There is no striking element in them ; yet when the eye falls upon them it rests, mildly pleased and comforted by an agreeable distribution of masses and arrangement of simple forms. This mild pleasure of the eye tends to raise a mental mood, in which the legend might be recalled, by one who knows it, and spiritually enjoyed. The picture does not by itself convey spiritual sustenance, but it harmonises, as soft music might, with a mood of mystical reverie.

Giotto was not a preacher, using Art for his medium of exposition, as Fra Angelico was. We fortunately know enough about Giotto as a man amongst men from almost contemporary accounts, to be able to form a tolerably full mental image of him. He appears to have

been what we call “a character.” He had an original way with him. He was devoid of all humbug, a hater of pretence. In his dealings and sayings he was direct and something of a humorist. He was more than a mere craftsman, or Dante would not have found his society delightful. Obviously he was original in thought as in Art. He looked at the world for himself, not as he was told to look at it. If a painting illustrative of Poverty, one of the Franciscan trinity of virtues, was demanded of him, he painted it to the best of his ability ; but that did not prevent him from writing a common-sense rhyme in dispraise of that same misfortune.

The works of art that he has left us are in full accord with his practical character, as it has been recorded. One of his chief artistic qualities was economy. He produced his effects with economy of means. Not only did he introduce the smallest number of necessary figures into his compositions, and only those accessories that the story needed for illustration and the space for suitable filling, but he

painted each figure as simply as possible. This is the more remarkable when the works of his masters are examined. They did not teach him this monumental simplicity. A draped Byzantine figure is generally covered over with a perfect labyrinth of decorative folds. Cast an eye aloft at Assisi and you will find that simplicity is a rare thing in the drapery of the old frescoes.

In this connection it is interesting to compare the Madonnas of Cimabue and Giotto, which hang together in the Academy at Florence. Giotto's Madonna is more archaic than his historical pictures because it had to be. People were not ready to accept the emblem of the divinity modernised and humanised too rapidly. We are a long way yet from the Madonnas of Botticelli. Still, Giotto's Virgin is more human than Cimabue's and less dignified and benign. What, however, I want you chiefly to notice is the difference in the treatment of details. The drapery of Cimabue's Madonna is broken up into a multitude of complex folds made to have their edges gilded

for the sake of a brilliant decorative effect. The drapery of Giotto's Virgin is broad and plain, its only decoration a narrow embroidered hem. The same is true of the drapery of the angels. The Rucellai Madonna in Santa Maria Novella, which some now insist to be by Duccio and not Cimabue, is an even more elaborately decorated picture. Every inch of it is wrought out with the fineness of a Greek miniature. There are patterns and embossings and engravings of gold surfaces wherever place can be found for them. Giotto sacrificed all such aids to popular applause and contented himself with the best composition, the best simple forms, and the directest expression of his subject that he could attain.

We need not doubt that he was thus enabled to paint pictures more cheaply than his predecessors. Giotto's Madonna in the Academy probably cost less than had Cimabue's. It is nonsense to object that cost is not an element worth consideration in Art-history. It is always an important element. I have little

doubt that Giotto's series of pictures of the Francis legend at Assisi were painted in less time per square foot than those of his predecessors. Obviously he painted fast or he could not have covered the area of wall with fresco which we know him to have covered in different parts of Italy.

Another interesting fact to observe is that Giotto was a great master of other men. It is not to be supposed that the whole Francis legend was painted by Giotto's own hand. Yet all the frescoes, except a few at the end of the series, bear the obvious impress of his mind. He may have been called away to Rome before the work was finished, so that the last pictures had to be both designed and painted by an able follower, whose name is unfortunately unrecorded. Where an artist has designed, or superintended the design and painting of a picture or set of pictures, it is right to credit them to him. Modern criticism is always trying to disentangle from the list of a master's works this and the other picture as done merely in his *bottega*. In my opinion a picture

that a painter sold as his is to be regarded as his, whether he actually painted it or not. Some masters are able to infuse so much of their own personality into works done mainly by assistants under their supervision, that those works are almost as much theirs as if they had been painted by their own hands. Thus it was with Raphael. Compare the works admittedly executed by his pupils under his direction, with works done by the same men, even following Raphael's own designs, but after his death. The former were to all intents and purposes by Raphael. A glance shows that the latter were not.

Thus it was with Giotto and his assistants at Assisi—the work of the assistants is the master's work. How powerful an effect Giotto produced on the next generation of painters is apparent when we come to consider the pictures produced during the next century, not in Florence only, but in many parts of Italy. I suggest, though with fear and trembling for the possible misrepresentation to which I lay myself open, that the cheapening of the

painting-process which Giotto effected had something to do with the rapid and wide-spreading of his style, and the complete disappearance of Greek mural painters thence-forward from Italy.

Without lingering over work done by Giotto in Rome, let me remind you again that he probably met Dante there. On his return to Assisi (according to my reckoning) he painted the four Allegories over the high altar of the Lower Church. Am I bold in hazarding the suggestion that in these Allegories we may trace an effect of the influence of the poet upon the painter? If Franciscanism abolished the old Byzantine symbolism, whereby each figure or group depicted stood as a kind of spiritual ideograph, or sacred decorative short-hand symbol, Franciscanism in return introduced Allegory into Italian Art. This also was in fact another borrowing from the north, for the sculptured portals of the great French Cathedrals, notably Chartres, Amiens, and Rheims, were filled with allegorical and emblematic sculptures at a time when Francis

was still alive, and before his influence had spread far afield.

As allegories, Giotto's four Assisi frescoes are most interesting, but I reserve for the present what I have to say about them. The point important to be observed now is that, as pictures, they show a marked advance upon those of the Francis legend. They can only be judged on the spot, for no reproductions give the least idea of them. Even their forms (painted on a curved surface) are of necessity distorted by photography. As compositions they carry out the promise of the earlier works, while with their greater elaboration and more multitudinous figures they surpass them in difficulties triumphantly overcome. Not only is each picture well-composed, but the four compositions harmonize together and counter-balance each other. It is their colour-scheme, however, with its fairer harmony and sweeter concord, that raises them on to a higher plane than the pictures of the Francis legend. They admirably decorate the space given to them. By the nature of their position, right over the

spectator's head, they are hard to gaze at ; it is therefore right that they should please at first glance. No doubt but they do so. Before the mind has ascertained their meaning the eye is satisfied. Presently individual faces and figures are noticed as beautiful. Last of all the originality and fine quality of the thought that inspires the whole is perceived, and completes the spectator's satisfaction.

Giotto's next great set of frescoes were painted in the Arena Chapel at Padua. They form the subject of Ruskin's well-known and suggestive volume, which every student of Giotto's work should read. I may therefore dismiss them with a few general observations. They consist mainly of a series of pictures of the life of the Virgin and the life of Christ. Here Giotto was not free, as he had been with the Francis legend. Almost every subject he had now to treat had been treated countless times before by all sorts and generations of artists of many lands. It was inevitable that Giotto should adhere to the general traditional arrangement of the subject. He did so, yet

without slavish obedience. Compare his picture of the Raising of Lazarus with a good Byzantine representation of the same subject. You will see at once how Giotto availed to infuse his own new ideas into the old forms, and create powerfully dramatic pictures without departing from the traditional composition.

The same lesson may be learnt by comparing the Crucifixion at Padua with Cimabue's Crucifixion (if it be his) in the Upper Church at Assisi. Here, if anywhere, we should look to find Giotto in the bondage of tradition, yet he escapes with apparent ease. The momentous nature of the event is better suggested by the older master, and even by his predecessor in the same church, but Giotto, confining himself to the actual Gospel narrative and the mere historical facts, tells the tale with a new pathos. Sweep his passionately grieving cherubs from the sky and all supernatural elements disappear ; yet the human interest remains—the grief of the women, the varied emotions of the men. It is a remarkable fact that you can examine this whole Paduan series of pictures

from beginning to end without finding one figure of doubtful meaning. As illustrations of a known tale these pictures are perfectly lucid. That is their first conspicuous merit.

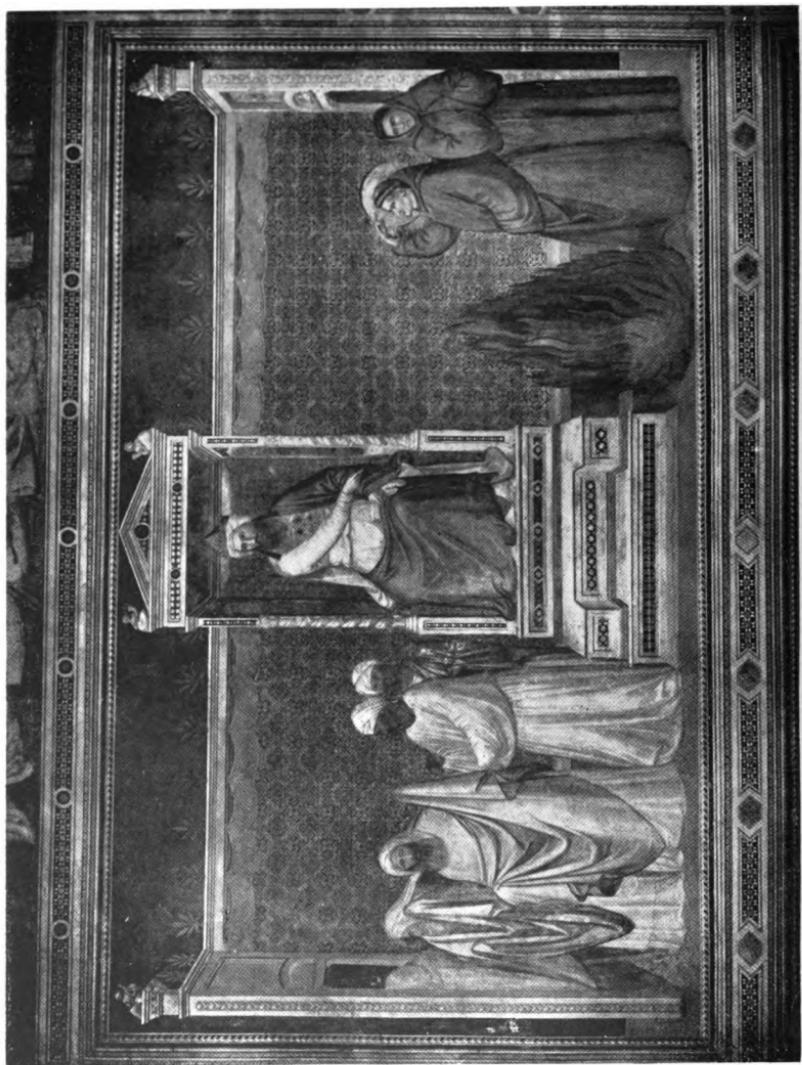
We saw how the church of St. Francis at Assisi was designed to be a field for painted decoration ; indeed the frescoes there are something more than mere decoration. They may be said to exist for their own sake. The Arena Chapel is little more than a roof and frame for pictures. Its architecture is entirely subordinate to the painting. It is no longer possible to regard the pictures as decoration. They are the purpose for which the chapel was built. In fact, with Giotto we enter a pictorial age. Before the Franciscan popular movement, architecture was the dominant art. Twelfth century symbolic mosaics were primarily decorative. They embellished, completed and dignified the building to which they were attached, just as the contemporary sculpture did. Perhaps nine persons out of ten who frequented one of the old cathedrals

never examined the decorations at all in detail. When we come to the later Renaissance—to interiors decorated by Perugino (such as the Cambio at Perugia), by Pinturicchio (the *Apartimento Borgia*), and by Raphael (the *Vatican Loggie*), we shall find painted decoration again subordinated to general effect ; but from the time of Giotto to Masaccio, painters took their own line. They were concerned to make their pictures intelligible illustrations of histories and legends ; if they attained that result they and their employers were satisfied. Giotto's *Arena Chapel* frescoes in their rectangular succession, might as well have been a series of framed paintings hung upon a blank wall. Being all painted in one scheme of colour and designed by one artist, they produce an effect, harmonious and pleasant ; but if decorative, it is so accidentally rather than intentionally.

Giotto must have spent a long time in Padua, for, besides his work in the *Arena Chapel*, he painted a series of frescoes in the chapter-house of the Franciscan convent of St.

Anthony, which no longer exist, and other now vanished works. It seems likely that he was afterwards again employed at Assisi where he painted a beautiful group of frescoes in the north transept of the Lower Church and in an adjacent chapel. In the transept he repeated some of his Padua compositions, adding to their charm without diminishing their lucidity. The pictures of the Visitation and Nativity are indeed amongst the most delightful of his works, pleasant in colour, excellent in balance, and inspired by a happy fancy as well as a serene imagination. Whether it is a flight of fluttering angels that he is painting, or a flock of sheep, he sheds over them the same pictorial charm ; while the sweetness of his human nature expressed itself in the tenderness of the enraptured mother, the helplessness of the little baby, and the fussy activities of the nurses.

At Florence he has left us invaluable, though now much restored, examples of his mature powers in the famous frescoes of the Francis legend, painted after 1317 in the Bardi



Giotto

St. FRANCIS BEFORE THE SULTAN.

S. Croce, Florence.

Alinari, Photo.

Reichenau plates 120, 121, and facing the other plates.



Anderson, Photo.

Giotto.

ST. FRANCIS BEFORE THE SULTAN.
Upper Church, Assisi.

Between pages 120, 121, and facing the other pri-

Chapel of Santa Croce, and no less excellent frescoes of incidents in the lives of John Baptist and John Evangelist in the neighbouring Peruzzi chapel. A comparison of the Francis pictures with the corresponding subjects painted at Assisi manifests the steady development of the artist's powers in the intervening years. The two pictures of St. Francis before Sultan el-Kamil (eldest son and successor of Saladin) are remarkable for their similarities, and their contrasts. Surprise has sometimes been expressed at the dignity with which the artist endowed the infidel king. El-Kamil, however, was not a mere name to the people of those days ; he was a well-known personality. It was this enlightened monarch and the equally enlightened Emperor Frederick II. who, to the disgust of Popes and Churchmen, made a statesmanlike and tolerant treaty in 1229, " the most remarkable that was ever signed between a Christian and a Mohammedan power before the days of European engagements with the Turkish Empire." El-Kamil is described as " prudent and firm in

counsel, an energetic and capable administrator, ' who managed his kingdom alone, ensured the safety of travellers, and, like most of his family, loved learning and the society of scholars.'* Thus it was wrong to assume that the Sultan of Giotto's picture was a mere typical infidel monarch. This particular Sultan's character and reputation must have been well known, and, it seems not improbable that Giotto, with his strong common sense, may have admired him. In the Assisi picture Giotto makes Francis the central figure ; but at Florence he gives that position to the Sultan, besides raising him higher aloft, and making him in all respects the finest and most striking personage in the composition. It is not necessary, though it would be easy, to suggest another than a merely artistic reason for the change. The artistic reason however suffices. A comparison between the two works gives instructive proof of the painter's development. The older picture is perhaps as lucid an illus-

* Stanley Lane Poole.

tration of the legend as the later, but the figures are less well drawn, the drapery is more poorly cast, the lines of the composition are less noble, and the grouping is more archaic. It is, however, in the architectural accessories and their distribution that the improvement is most apparent. In Assisi they are of an ill-proportioned Romanesque character, badly contrasting with one another and awkwardly drawn. At Florence the central throne is of charming design and good proportions, whilst the surrounding wall and hangings simply and beautifully enclose the figures and account for their grouping.

In 1334 Giotto was appointed architect of the Florentine cathedral.* In 1336 he is known to have been at Milan ; and he died at Florence on January 8th, 1337. He did not therefore remain long in charge of the building operations. His important contribution was the design of the beautiful Campanile. What is by some believed to be the actual drawing on a sheet of parchment is

* Gaye, *Carteggio inedito*, I. 483.

preserved at Siena to the present day.* The Campanile was founded in 1334 with much ceremony, and the bottom storey was built by Giotto. Orcagna, who was Andrea Pisano's pupil, and so ought to have known, says that Giotto himself modelled some of the beautiful little hexagonal bas-reliefs on this storey. The remainder, with the exception of five hexagons added later by Luca della Robbia, obviously from other designs, were the work of Andrea Pisano. That artist succeeded Giotto as architect (1337—1343) and built the next storey, which has four statues in niches on each face. Taddeo Guddi, who was architect from 1343 to 1351, built the storeys with the double windows. Finally Francesco Talenti, in 1351, and the year or years immediately following, built the top storey, with its beautiful triple window on each face. All these artists adhered in the main to Giotto's original design.

The belt of sculptures round the base are deservedly admired. They have been de-

* See for the history of the building C. Guasti: *S. M. del Fiore*; Florence, 1887, 8vo.

scribed and praised by Ruskin, and stand in no need of recommendation from me. We have reason to believe that at least the first seven of the series of octagonal reliefs were carved from Giotto's models. He may have designed the whole series. If Orcagna's direct statement had not been recorded, no one, perhaps, would have thought of ascribing the designs to Giotto, for the simple reason that we possess no other known works of his in the same kind with which to compare them. They do not resemble either his panel or his fresco pictures, nor is it to be expected that they should.

The conspicuous merit of these little sculptures is the admirable way in which they are adapted to the spaces they have to fill. It is a merit possessed by all Giotto's paintings and by Andrea Pisano's reliefs. Whether Andrea derived it from Giotto we cannot say. He certainly did not derive it from his master in sculpture, Giovanni Pisano, whose works lack that particular quality. The hexagonal reliefs of the lower tier are more finely finished and more elaborate in design, as being nearer the

spectator's eye than are the figures in lozenges higher up. Those are relieved against a coloured background. It is curious that comparatively little attention has been paid to them, and yet, in their place and for their purpose, they are no wise inferior to the hexagons. They consist of a series of allegorical figures, representing the Seven Virtues, Seven Liberal Arts, Seven Sacraments, and so forth. To quote only one example, the Sacrament of the Mass is an admirable design beautifully carried out. Its simplicity and lucidity are as remarkable as the charm of the design and the excellence of the execution, at once bold enough to be effective at a distance, and yet to suggest delicacy when beheld from the intended stand-point of a spectator.

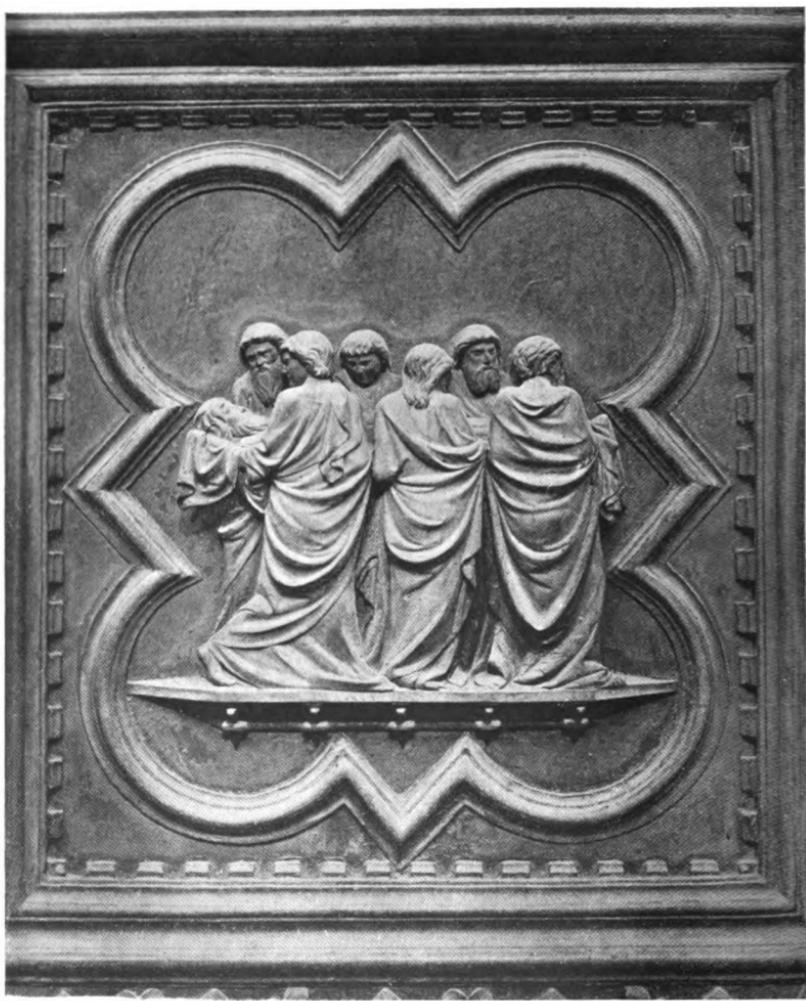
If it were necessary to select one of the lower series of hexagons to stand as representative of all, my choice would be the *Jabal*, "father of such as dwell in tents and of such as have cattle." He sits upon the ground and, opening the door of his tent, looks forth serenely upon his flock (I suppose), his little dog being just

outside. This seems to me the most Giottesque panel. I suppose Giotto never dwelt in tents. If he had done so, he would have experienced the delight of sitting in his tent door, amongst his small possessions, and gazing forth upon the great outside world, especially at sunset. The tent itself is beautifully sculptured, the droop and hang of it rendered with skill, and the whole designed to fit perfectly into the given space and, with its large and dignified surfaces, to surround and set off the face and figure of the worthy patriarch.

Anyone who will intimately examine these Campanile reliefs, both of the lower and the upper ring, and will devote equal attention to the allegorical figures painted in the Arena Chapel at Padua, will find both series, I think, inspired by the same spirit. This does not prove that both were designed by Giotto. The spirit may have been the spirit of the day. The community of sentiment, however, is confirmatory, so far as it goes, of Orcagna's direct statement; it harmonises with the known fact that Giotto designed the Campanile

and built its lower storey, and with the consequent probability that he did not leave its most important feature to be entirely supplied by another artist, however skilful. That was not the way architects conceived their functions to be limited then, any more than it is now. At Orvieto there exists the original design of the Cathedral façade, probably by Arnolfo. The façade, as built, varies from the design, and varies for the worse, but it is noteworthy that the sculptured decoration of the piers was provided for by the original architect.

We cannot be wrong in concluding that Andrea Pisano derived no small advantage from contact with Giotto, though Giotto perhaps learned more from contemporary sculptors than they did from him. Possessing as he did the technical traditions and skill of the Pisan school of sculpture, which, as we have seen, inherited both classical and Byzantine methods, he used them to give sculptured form to those same new ideals which Giotto expressed in the domain of painting. He had, indeed, already shown himself fit compeere



Alinari, Photo.

Andrea Pisano.

BURIAL OF JOHN BAPTIST.
Gates of the Baptistery, Florence

Facing page 129.

with Giotto, in the beautiful bronze gates which he designed in 1330, before the Campanile's foundations were laid. As decorated doors they are finer than Ghiberti's and more severe ; but their good qualities are of a less popular sort. If a visitor to Florence will stand at a point equi-distant from Andrea's and Ghiberti's doors, whence he can see both, he will quickly perceive how superior the old ones are in decorative effect. It is only when you come close up to Ghiberti's that the grace of the figures reveals its exquisite charm. Yet the panels of Andrea's doors are not really less beautiful, even in form, whilst they are more truly sculpturesque, and far lovelier in sentiment.

One might select a panel at random for study, for all are excellent and all adapted to their places, those below the line of sight being simpler than those upon and above it. If I ask you now to examine the panels representing John the Baptist's Disciples carrying him to the Tomb, and burying him, it is not because they are better than the rest, but

because space compels us to make a selection. In each instance you will note how beautifully the artist fills the area at his disposal ; how excellently he groups his masses and breaks up his draperies to reflect the light with a pleasing glitter ; and, finally, what sweetness of sentiment he infuses into his figures. It is all done so simply. There is no passion of grief in the sorrowing disciples, yet who can doubt their affection and sincerity ? I know of no work of early Tuscan Art, not even by Giotto himself, more serenely complete and suited for its place than this ; none more lovely. Its little details of decoration, alternate nail-heads and flowers, with lion-heads at the panel-corners, are perfect for their purpose. The outside frame, added at a later day, by Ghiberti and his pupils, however elaborate and even beautiful in details, now mainly serves by its relatively confused effect at a distance to manifest the superior decorative quality of the doors it was intended to enrich.

We have little space left to consider the work of Giotto's pupils and followers in paint-

ing. Truth to tell few of them need detain us long. The best were the man called Giottino and the unknown artist who painted the last frescoes in the Francis series at Assisi and a chapel in the Lower Church. To him also is rightly ascribed an attractive picture in the Uffizi at Florence. This unknown master makes his figures far too long and gives them impossibly small heads and feet ; yet he was a true artist for all that. If he painted lanky figures, it must have been because he liked them lanky. He liked curious architecture, too, and was probably a somewhat fantastic person. A tower in the background of one of his pictures suggests that he had seen Trajan's column and therefore been in Rome. Perhaps he was one of Giotto's helpers there. We really know nothing about him.

Giottino is a rather confused creation of Vasari's, who mixed two, if not three men together—one Maso, another Giotto di Stefano. The painter worth remembering is he who made certain frescoes in Santa Croce and at Assisi. He was not a pupil of Giotto, for he

was only sixteen years old when Giotto died. His most notable picture represents the miracles of St. Silvestro, where the saint is shown exorcising the evil breath of a horse-headed dragon and restoring to consciousness two men who had been overpowered by it. Giottino surrounds the scene with a weirdly romantic background. His figures are grandly simple as Giotto might have made them, but natural in gesture and expression. His colouring is remarkably rich and harmonious for the day, but, except it be in colour, he made no advance beyond that accomplished by his great predecessor.

This statement is indeed true of the whole mass of Florentine followers and imitators of Giotto—that is to say, of Florentine artists generally throughout the remainder of the fourteenth century. In their hands the pictorial art made no advance. On the contrary, it retrograded. No advancing school of Art can live by imitation. Instead of going to Nature, painters went to Giotto, or worse still, they copied one another. Some of Giotto's

immediate pupils, such as Taddeo Gaddi, occasionally came very near the master in their handling of particular subjects. Now and again their panel pictures and altar-pieces are of considerable decorative merit, but their areas of fresco are a weariness to the eye. Taddeo Gaddi's series in the Baroncelli Chapel at Santa Croce are better than Giovanni da Milano's in the Rinuccini Chapel, and those in turn than Agnolo Gaddi's legend of the Holy Cross in the choir-chapel. The pictures grow larger, the figures more numerous, the compositions worse. In one respect only do they show a development; they tell their stories more completely.

Giotto had been satisfied to rend the heart out of an incident and depict it in a few trenchant figures. This pleased the popular taste at first, but ultimately only whetted their appetite for more. What the public and the Franciscans wanted was not Art but illustration. It mattered nothing to them whether the pictures were good or bad; they wanted them to tell a well-known tale. They de-

manded illustrated literature. That is what the followers of Giotto gave them. As far as painting is concerned, the fourteenth century was in Florence a period of decline. It could scarcely have been otherwise with the influences at work. In the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries artists were employed to work for a group of men who evidently appreciated not the mere subjects handled, but the manner in which they were handled—that is to say, the art of the artist. When the popular party came into power, and the Franciscans disposed of the bulk of the Art-Fund, it was otherwise. The new men disliked the old work and associated the old style with a state of society distasteful to them. They wanted a new set of subjects treated in a new way. It was not beauty they were seeking, but painted sermons of their own sort. Artists had to give them what they wanted and Art accordingly suffered.

After Arnolfo and Giotto, architecture likewise declined in Florence. The Campanile marks the culmination of Tuscan Gothic.

Later buildings are heavier, less well proportioned, less fanciful. The neighbouring Cathedral shows the decline. No one, I imagine, really likes any part of it except the mass of the Dome. Its beautiful marble surface gains nothing from the forms that break it up. The side portals, for all their elaboration and some beautiful details, are poor and ineffectual. The Bigallo Loggia close by would not attract much attention if it were not in Florence. When we come to Orsanmichele, if we were to blot out the niches with their famous statuary in the walls (which belong to a later epoch of Art), we should deprive the building of its charm. Its windows are bad in proportion and of clumsy and graceless tracery for all its elaboration. Worst of all, to my thinking, as a work of architecture, is the famous shrine within, made by Orcagna. It is oppressively heavy in general effect. Its mouldings are ill-designed. It is overladen with decoration producing no general decorative effect. In venturing thus to judge this famous work, I must, however, remind you

that much of the sculpture that forms part of this decoration is excellent. Many of the panels are beautiful as sculptured panels. Individual figures are fine. The railing is good, and so are several other parts taken alone. It is the whole, as an architectural whole, especially when seen from close at hand, that is unsuccessful, overladen, and in bad taste. It was doubtless felt to be so, for its style of architecture was replaced shortly afterwards by that called Early Renaissance, a style which many of us think as full of grace and charm as the decadent Renaissance was exaggerated and overladen. With the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, however, we are not now concerned. What I wish to enforce is the statement that the artistic movement, which we may call in a broad sense Franciscan, culminated, alike in architecture, sculpture, and painting, as far as Florence was concerned, about the end of the first quarter of the fourteenth century. It began in sculpture and architecture with Arnolfo di Cambio. It culminated in architecture and

painting with Giotto, in sculpture with Andrea Pisano.

Outside Florence there flourished during this period of decline another school of painting, not Franciscan nor popular, with which we have next to deal. We shall find that it was not a school of narrative painting, but was concerned with a different set of subjects. This school likewise carried on some of the Giottesque traditions. The school that declined was the Franciscan narrative school, the painters of illustrations, the preachers of edifying tales. They confused, or were made to confuse, description with Art. The result was calamitous from the artistic point of view. The walls of Santa Croce, when Giotto's followers had done with them, may have been full of edification ; but, except where Cimabue, Giotto, or Giottino, painted them, they did not glow with beauty.

A school of Art that does not make beauty its aim does not attain beauty. A tale may be most edifying, but it does not follow that a truthful telling of it in paint will be beautiful.

The Seven Virtues were fine intellectual conceptions, and some artists made beautiful paintings and sculptures of figures emblematic of them ; others made bad pictures, though equally lucid as emblems. The confusion between good Art and good sermons is no modern invention. It was, in fact, never made on so colossal a scale as by artists in Franciscan employ during the fourteenth century. An equally common modern mistake is to read some moral or religious sentiment into a beautiful work of Art, merely because of its beauty. When we come to consider the work of Fra Angelico we shall see how a truly religious mind manifests itself in painting. That is quite a different matter. The character of a sincere artist always shows itself in his work. Giotto's practical good sense is as manifest in his pictures as Fra Angelico's sweet aspiring nature is in his. It would have been so whatever subjects they had chosen for their pictures. Both attained beauty in their work, just as Rembrandt did in painting the carcase of an ox, because their hearts loved beauty.

They looked out upon the world and saw beauty where others beheld only the sordid fact ; they looked for beauty and found it everywhere ; they conceived it in the silence of their own hearts. The day was to come when the search for beauty was to be the quest of the whole school of Florentine painters and sculptors ; but it did not come so long as the Franciscan popular ideal reigned. The Franciscan movement, though it stirred and gave employment to the artists of Italy, rather retarded than helped on the revival of Italian Art. It had the good luck to find a Giotto to be its minister. But it found him ; it did not make him. When he died it was powerless to produce an artist of equal, still less one of greater rank to replace him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIENESE SCHOOL.

A TRAVELLER is more likely to be struck by contrasts than by similarities between the cities of Florence and Siena. Florence lies at the foot of hills, amidst gardens and level fields by the Arno's bank—a city open to traffic, the centre of convergence for many roads. Siena is raised upon a hill-top, and uses the crater of an extinct volcano for her market-place. Rolling mounds, clothed with rich red soil, make tortuous the ways beneath her precipitous walls to her fortress gateways. All mediæval cities were hives of industry, but Florence was more obviously a city of merchants and manufacturers than Siena. In the thirteenth century most of the fortified Florentine palaces were overthrown. Siena

to the present day bears the seal of her ancient aristocracy. Her streets and houses are still admirably adapted for domestic fighting, and retain the old adjustments for barricades. In the fourteenth century the glory of Florence was her guilds ; the glory of Siena at the same period was her great families. While Florence was ruled by her popular party, the aristocracy controlled Siena. Florence, in fact, was Guelph ; Siena was Ghibelline.

The ancient centres of population in Tuscany and Umbria were mostly hill-crowning cities. Orvieto, Perugia, Assisi, Cortona, Arezzo, Siena, Fiesole looked down from their barren heights upon the lower slopes and alluvial plains, where the work of agriculture was done. When people began to build houses at the foot of the hill of Fiesole, instead of on its top, they took a step involving important consequences to future generations. Florence owed to her situation on the flat ground much of her suitability to become a centre of industry. Being a convenient city for work, workmen drifted into her, as they did, possibly

for a similar reason, into Lucca. The hill-top cities were better places for fighting and defence, so the fighting families stayed in them.

Perhaps some of the strength of Siena's Ghibelline character came from mere political induction. Neighbouring towns in those days were liable to hate one another with a bitter hatred. So it was with Perugia and Assisi, and so with Florence and Siena. The fact that Florence was Guelph would alone almost have sufficed to make Siena and Pisa Ghibelline. Ghibelline, at all events, Siena was to the heart's core. Her principles not only dictated her policy and manifested themselves in the mode of life of her citizens, but they also inspired her Art. Her people were proud, fond of show, luxurious, cultured, and (for their day) refined. Dante wrote of them (*Inferno*, XXIX. 121) :—

“ Was ever folk
Vain as Siena's ? Even the French themselves
Are not so light.”

Dante, you must remember, was a Ghibelline and the voice of the Ghibellines. Save as a

patriotic Florentine, he was not likely to be prejudiced against a Ghibelline city. When exiled with his party from Florence, he resided for a time at Siena, so that he knew from personal observation the people whose character he thus outlined.

The history of Siena in the fourteenth century is the history of a succession of oligarchies and despotisms. Such popular insurrections as occurred did not long interrupt the aristocratic system of government. Nevertheless, Siena prospered exceedingly, till the plague ruined her. She gave employment to numerous artists, who worked for and under the direction of the aristocracy. The Sienese School of Art, therefore, was affected, and to a great degree directed, by forces different from those that determined the character of the Art of Florence. So long as Florence was aristocratic, the styles of Florentine and Sienese artists were similar, nor, as we have seen, did the popular upheaval in Florence immediately affect the character of her Art. It merely established a new tendency, whose

effect became presently apparent. The works of Florentine Cimabue and Sienese Duccio express practically the same ideal in the same style. But when we come to the next generation of artists, a change is apparent.

“ Two surpassing painters have I known,” wrote Petrarch, “ Giotto the Florentine, whose fame is great amongst the moderns, and Simone, the Sienese.” This Simone, son of Martino, born about the year 1283, may be regarded as a typical artist of the Sienese School, a typically Ghibelline painter, as Giotto was typically Guelph. Let us immediately examine an important example of his work, a picture painted on the wall of the Palazzo Publico at Siena, characteristic alike of the Sienese School and of the Ghibelline ideal. It is the portrait of Guidoriccio da Fogliano, general of the Sienese forces and victor at Montemassi and Sassoferro. This monumental painting occupies a wall of the Chamber of the Great Council, right opposite the picture of the Virgin and Saints, which we must presently examine. It is the Ghibel-

line ideal' of a man. The general is seen alone, mounted on his charger, with the stockades of Montemassi in the background. He is riding along, as majestically as the painter could make him, holding his truncheon of authority in his hand. Horse and man are draped in splendid golden stuffs, embroidered with the general's bearings, which curve and flutter nobly. The ideal Florentine of the day walked abroad "in leathern girdle with a clasp of bone." For your Sienese noble, on the contrary, no stuff was too gorgeous. We cannot say whether it was mere lack of skill, or whether it was lack of will that prevented Simone from making the figures of horse and man physically finer. Andrea del Castagno and Paolo Uccelli, a century later, mindful perhaps of this very picture, painted similar monumental frescoes of mounted knights in the Cathedral of Florence; but they gave prominence to the physical power of horse and man. Simone hid both in fine drapery, and applied all his skill to make his subject splendid and dignified in aspect.

The earliest of Simone's known pictures (painted in 1315) is one of the best examples of what has been called his lyrical style. It is the "Maesta," or fresco of the enthroned Virgin and Child surrounded by saints, which occupies the wall over against Guidoriccio in the Chamber of the great Council in the Palazzo Publico at Siena. It represents the patron saints of the town interceding for Siena. The Virgin sits on a fine Gothic throne; the Child stands upon her knee, blessing; angels with baskets of flowers kneel before her; and the gentle saints stand on either hand. Two stanzas of verses written upon the picture explain its meaning, and give the Virgin's reply to the prayer of the Saints. "My beloved," she says, "be assured that I will accomplish your devout honourable petitions according to your desire. But if the strong molest the weak, oppressing them with outrage or extortion, your prayers shall not avail for them, nor for any traitor to my land. The angels' flowers," she continues, "the lilies and roses that deck the fields of heaven, are not

more sweet to me than good counsels. But if there be a man who scorneth me and betrayeth my land for his own profit, and who, the worse he counselleth the more highly is he praised, let him be damned with those that praise him."

This Virgin, then, is Siena's heavenly Queen, who was honestly believed to inspire councillors with wisdom, to pity the poor and restrain the mighty, and whose delight was the magnificence and prosperity of the city of her choice—*Sena vetus civitas virginis*. If Guidoriccio was the Ghibelline ideal of a man, this was the corresponding ideal of a woman; how different from Giotto's massively human, matronly type! High-breeding is this one's first quality; she is every inch a lady—reposeful, graceful, benign—a lineal descendant of the Empresses of Byzantium through the Madonnas of Cimabue and Duccio. She is as full of charm as the painter could make her. The pose of her head, the curvature of her wrist, the folds of her drapery are alike graceful. Her hair is light in colour, her skin most

fair. Her clothes are in exquisite taste, ornament confined to hems, clasps, and crown. She wears nothing over-gorgeous, nothing of extravagant form. Queenly indeed she is, but her power is in her gentleness, not commanding, but drawing the hearts of men unto her.

Among all the Madonnas of Italy we find none like this, except those painted by Sienese artists. The Virgins of earlier painters held themselves more aloof ; those of later painters became more familiar. This Madonna, and others of the same school and period, expressed not so much the conception of an individual as the faith of a community—an admirable faith to temper and ennable an aristocratic or despotic government—that in the unseen world there dwells a higher than the highest earthly power, robed in gentleness and crowned with pity, restraining the tyranny of the strong and dominating the counsels of the proud—in fact, that there is a God above and that “the hearts of Kings are in His hand.”

Vasari says that Simone was Giotto's pupil. If it was so, the master left no more impression on the pupil beyond such technical instruction as he may have given him, than Cimabue did on Giotto. Simone's Art is a direct continuation of Duccio's. Giotto broke with many of the traditions of the past, and his Florentine scholars followed him; Simone and his followers adhered to the old traditions but gave them a new development. If Siena had not been ruined by the plague in 1348 (when 80,000 of her citizens died), there is no knowing what might not have been accomplished by these conservative painters. Their panel-pictures are no less meritorious than their wall-paintings. We fortunately possess several, painted by Simone himself.

One of the best is the Annunciation now in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, which Simone painted in conjunction with his brother-in-law, Lippo Memmi—an enchanting picture. In drawing it is archaic, as a comparison between the angel's fluttering robe and a corresponding garment in the fresco of Abraham's

Sacrifice in the Upper Church at Assisi readily proves. There is an archaic spirit throughout it, but the whole is invested with a new charm and with new beauties. Nothing can exceed its decorative excellence. The gold background and halos are invested with every kind of sheen and glitter that gold can be made to yield. The simple colours employed are as pure as colours can be, and fascinatingly combined. No painter ever invested a pot of lilies or a crown and branch of myrtle with lovelier significance. Hands and eyes may be faulty in drawing, perspective not entirely perfect, yet these errors are lost in the beauty of the picture as a whole. As a pattern of colours and textures it is beyond praise, whilst it embodies and expresses as perfectly as any picture ever did the mystic subject it was intended to represent.

Siennese artists must be admitted to have excelled in the decorative employment of gold. They were not afraid to cover large areas with it. They also handled it with extreme dex-

terity in the form of halos and marginal decorations. They engraved and punched patterns on the gesso surface of the panel, sometimes before and sometimes after it was gilt. They embossed architectural mouldings on to the panel, made the frame an integral part of the design, and carried the decoration of the frame and the mouldings on to the panel itself with punched or engraved details. The Florentines did the same thing, but not with the same skill, if we except Fra Angelico, who was in some respects as much Sienese as Florentine in his Art. Even second-rate Sienese artists possessed an excellent decorative sense and seldom failed to produce panel-pictures which are a joy to behold. The merit belonged to the whole school and arose out of the society for which the school worked. Doubtless, if we could turn a time-reversing telescope upon the Sienese of the first half of the thirteenth century we should find that the well-to-do classes were clothed in the same good taste which all the pictures of the period manifest.

It seems hardly necessary to say that we need not look to Simone for dramatic depiction of events. Yet the friars of Assisi did not fail to employ so fine an artist to paint for them. His actual paymaster was the Franciscan Cardinal Gentile de Montefloris, who set him to fresco a chapel in the Lower Church with incidents from the legend of St. Martin of Tours. They are amongst the most decorative, and to me they are the most pleasing frescoes at Assisi. If they lack the directness and force of Giotto, they possess other charms no less delightful. Technically they have many excellences. Faces and hands have a peculiar ivory-like texture, unusual in fresco. Draperies are richly coloured; in fact the whole chapel glows and shimmers with fair colour in utter perfection of tasteful harmony. Architectural accessories are gracefully designed, and, of course, well and elaborately decorated. But beyond all this there is a sweetness of sentiment expressed which fascinates the careful beholder. Once he has caught the charm, it

will hold him until his neck grows stiff with upward gazing.

Above the entrance arch is a picture of St. Martin receiving the donor, remarkable for breadth of composition at its date—such sense of space and repose, of where to put things and how much to put, and then such admirable feeling in the two figures, devotion on the one hand, kindness on the other. Graceful line rules everywhere; suavity, balance of mass, harmony of pretty colours, and all things sweet in character too, as shown in drapery, pose, expression, grouping, and all accessories.

Simone, moreover, has pretty thoughts and fancies. One fresco, of course, shows Martin cutting off half his cloak to give to a beggar on a cold day. The next tells how, one night when Martin was asleep in bed, Christ came to him, wearing the very cloak given to the beggar and accompanied by beautiful angels, and how, standing by the sleeper's bedside, Christ preached of Charity to the angels, showing them Martin and the

cloak, and how glad they all were. The picture is an example of Simone's lyrical treatment of a legendary incident.

Besides working at Assisi, Simone was employed at several other places, such as Naples and Pisa. At the beginning of the year 1339 he was summoned to go with his wife and brother to the Papal Court at Avignon, and he spent the last five years of his life there. Unfortunately, little remains of the frescoes he then painted in the plenitude of his powers. By a strange chance, however, there exists in fair preservation in the Art Gallery at Liverpool a panel-picture done at this time. It represents an uncommon subject, the Return of the Child Jesus to His parents from the Temple. In its decorative adjuncts it is as beautifully wrought as any picture of the fourteenth century, but I think a spectator standing before it will be mainly impressed by the charm of sentiment in it. Simone does not adhere to the Bible narrative. The Mother's anxiety has kept her at home in prayer. The Father

brings the boy and has evidently been solicitous for both. They are not angry with him, nor is he apologetic, but evidently reserved. No other painter would have treated the subject thus. It is in such ways that Simone reveals his own personality and endears himself to us even now.

During his residence at Avignon, Simone was brought into intimate relation with Petrarch, and painted for him the *Portrait of Laura*, unfortunately now lost or destroyed. The Poet sang its praises in three fine Sonnets (56, 57 and 59). Simone, he said, must have beheld and painted Laura in Paradise. So gentle was her expression in the picture that to look at it brought peace. If one spoke to her she seemed to listen sweetly, as though about to reply.* The only existing pictorial monument of the friendship between poet and painter is a miniature in a MS. of Virgil, now in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. This manuscript belonged to Petrarch, who, in a

* See E. Muntz, "Petrarque et Simone Martini," *Gazette archeologique*, 1887.

couple of hexameters in his own handwriting, states that the miniature was painted by Simone, doubtless in accordance with his directions. Petrarch writes of the painter as "my Simone," and doubtless influenced him as Dante influenced Giotto. The combination was in both cases fortunate. If the poet of the Divine Comedy and the painter of the Life of St. Francis had much in common, there was an even closer sympathy between Petrarch and Simone, for in the art of both the lyrical element predominated.

We never find Simone struggling to depict an event as it happened. His frescoes and his panel-pictures alike deal not with facts but with dreams and fancies. His conceptions were pictorial, not literary. He was not concerned to tell stories, but to paint pictures. We never find him endeavouring to express by means of paint a subject that does not lend itself to pictorial treatment. He saw what he painted; he did not read a description of an event and then set to work to illustrate it. His pictures of the St. Martin legend are self-ex-

plicatory ; you don't need to know the legend before you can understand them. Moreover, as pictures should, they please the eye before their meaning is approached, just as the music and rhythm of poetry pleases apart from the sense of the words. As in good poetry, again, the form of the poem and music of the words matches and helps to express the subject, being smooth and dainty where that is sweet, gay and rippling where it is fanciful, massive where that is severe, rugged where it is stern, dignified where it is solemn ; so in Simone's pictures, and in Sienese pictures generally, the suave outlines, tender colouring, and bright refined decoration are applied only to the depicting of subjects with which such forms and qualities harmonise.

At Avignon, in 1344, Simone Martini made his will and died, seven years after the death of Giotto. Though he had succeeded in resisting the influence of the great Florentine's dramatic style and in working out his own simpler ideal by adhering rather closely to the old traditions, other Sienese painters were

not so independent. Thus Pietro Lorenzetti (1285-1348) and his younger brother Ambrogio, approximately contemporaries of Simone, both yielded to Giotto's influence and thus gave to a branch of the Sienese school a new direction. About Pietro we know little, but Vasari has preserved a probably contemporary account of Ambrogio which is worth quoting.

“Ambrogio,” he says, “dwelt in honour at Siena, not only because he was an excellent master in painting, but also because in his youth he so applied himself to letters that they became his useful and sweet companions in painting, and of such ornament to him all his life that they, no less than his mastery of painting, rendered him amiable and pleasing. Wherefore, he not only held converse with men of letters and virtue, but he was employed to his great honour and advantage in the affairs of his State. Ambrogio's manners were praiseworthy in all respects and rather those of a gentleman and a philosopher than of a craftsman. . . . He bore with a temperate and

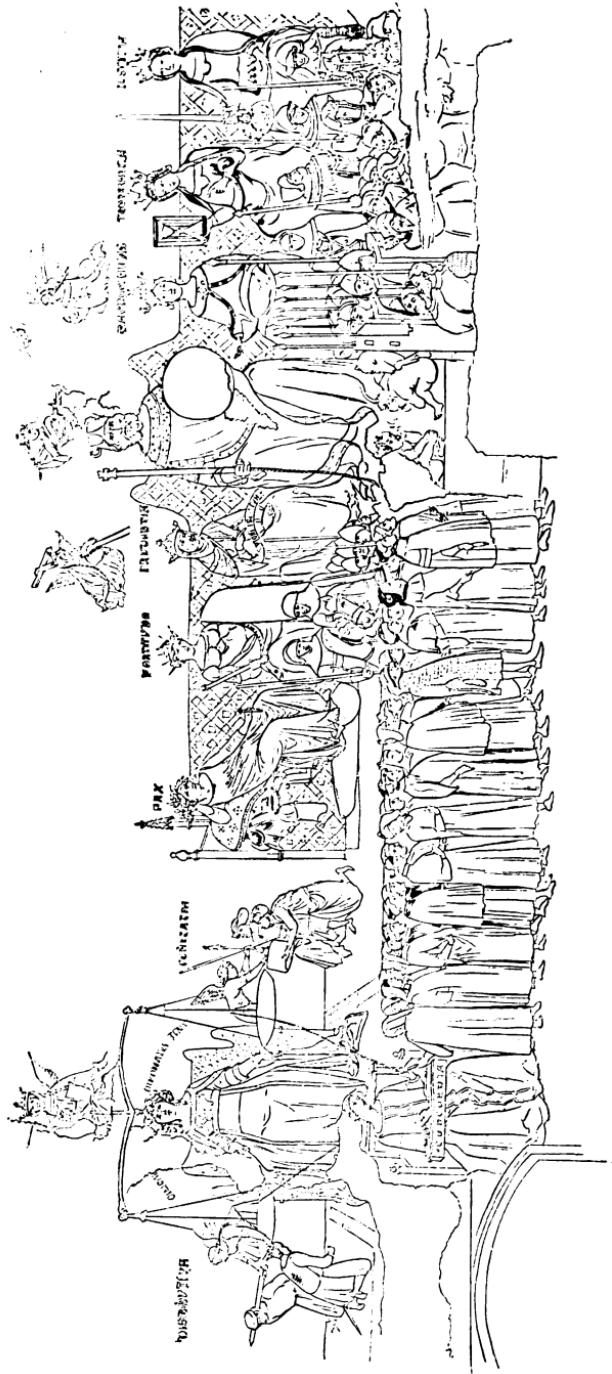
quiet mind the good and evil which fortune sent him." In this man, therefore, it is clear that we shall have to do with a very different personality from either Giotto or Simone. Ambrogio, in fact, belongs to the type of artist which we meet with in perfection later, in such men as Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer. Besides being artists they were men of science, philosophers, authors, and people of all-round interests and activities. Their Art consequently suffered. They were liable to confuse science or literature with Art. Ambrogio did not fail to suffer from a form of that intellectual disease and has left a monumental example of it in the frescoes he painted on the walls of the Hall of the Nine in the Palazzo Publico at Siena. I think it will be worth our while to examine these pictures in some detail. When we come to deal with the frescoes in the Spanish Chapel at Florence we shall find a connexion between them and these.

The Nine were the supreme council which governed Siena. The walls of their meeting-room were to be decorated, and Ambrogio was

employed to do the work (1337-1340). He painted on them, doubtless in consultation with the authorities, three frescoes representing Good and Bad Government and their corresponding effects. As Simone had painted in the neighbouring hall the Ghibelline ideals of Divine Protection and manly worth, so here Ambrogio painted the Ghibelline ideal of Government. What Dante's treatise *De Monarchia* was in literature, that Ambrogio's frescoes were in paint. It was a bold and at the time an original effort. Three walls of the oblong room had to be covered. On the end wall he painted Good Government ; on one of the long walls he painted its results ; on the other long wall he painted Bad Government and its results together.

The fresco of Good Government consists of a number of emblematic figures, not pictorially but philosophically arranged. Briefly stated, the arrangement is this. Wisdom hovers over the head of Justice, who holds scales, one of Distributive Justice (where an angel metes out rewards and punishments), the other

GOOD GOVERNMENT.



of Commutative Justice (where another angel settles a dispute). Cords, descending from the scales, unite in the hand of Concord, who passes them on through the hands of a body of citizens to that of the colossal chief ruler, sitting on a throne between the Virtues. Thus the idea expressed is that Concord is at once the source of a ruler's power and a people's prosperity, and that Concord results from Justice. "Love Justice ye that are judges of the earth" is the sentence written over the head of the symbolic figure. Justice turns her gaze upward upon Heavenly Wisdom, to show that she must be divinely directed. Concord results from Justice, because Justice not only eliminates evil doers and promotes the virtuous, but keeps men at peace with their neighbours by settling disputes. Concord in the picture with her rope arranges the procession of citizens one behind another, setting each man in his place; but she likewise holds a plane to indicate that she makes all men equal in the presence of Justice. Thus ordered the citizens march to the throne of the Ruler

and tender up to him the rope that connects them and comes ultimately from Justice. The end of this rope is the sceptre in the Ruler's hand. Over his head are the three Celestial Virtues—Faith, Hope fixing her eye upon the face of Christ, and Charity with a flaming heart. The temporal Virtues are ranged on either hand of the Ruler, as councillors on the bench. They are Prudence, who is old and grave, pondering on things past, present, and to come ; Magnanimity, paying the labourer and crowning the hero ; Fortitude, with shield and mace, wearing a thorny crown, for the law of her life is anything but easy ; Temperance watching an hour-glass ; Peace, a fair figure deservedly admired—she rests from warfare, but in resting makes a pillow of her breast-plate and a footstool of helmet and shield ; she holds an olive-branch and is crowned with olive to show that her rest has been won by Victory ; finally Justice once more, this time imperially crowned and holding sword and crown for punishment or reward.

The artist has endeavoured to express in the face and figure of the Ruler a man of high intellectual force, calm, thoughtful, powerful, and reserved. He holds no weapon of offence, only the sceptre, whose power comes from the citizens, and a shield to defend himself from attack. He grips the sceptre firmly. The arms of Siena are on his shield and the wolf, the city's badge, lies by the wall which Magnanimity's soldiers defend at his feet. At the feet of Fortitude, Temperance and Justice are the knights, for they should be brave, temperate and just. The Councillors are at the feet of Prudence. Finally, contrasted with the orderly procession of townsfolk who hold the cord of Justice on the one side, we find on the other a batch of malefactors bound together by another sort of cord and led up to the Ruler for condemnation.

The results of Good Government are seen on the neighbouring wall—peace and security within the city and the surrounding country at all seasons of the year. The Seven Liberal Arts flourish. The schoolmaster teaches the

young. Maidens dance in the market-place. Workmen ply their tasks. Squires and dames of high degree ride through the busy street, and the country-folk arrive with their produce for market. The country roads are safe, highwaymen being duly hanged. So people may ride a-hawking in the fields. Ploughmen, sowers, reapers, and threshers do their work in due season. Castles on the distant hills indicate that the approaches of the town are guarded. Not far away is a safe haven on the sea whence journeying can be made into distant lands.

Lest the spectator should be unable to interpret this mass of Allegorical figures, explanatory scrolls bearing stanzas of verses are painted in, here and there. Thus of Concord we read : "Where this sacred Virtue reigns she brings many minds into unity. When men have thus come together they make the Commonweal their Ruler. He determines, in governing his State, never to divert his eyes from the splendour of the faces of the Virtues who surround him. So custom, tribute, and

lordship of the earth are gladly rendered unto him, and all things useful, necessary and pleasant for the State are increased without war." With reference to Justice a direct exhortation is addressed to the Nine: " Turn your eyes upon this one, ye that are rulers. She that is here figured is crowned for her excellency. She rendereth unto every man his due. Behold, how many good things proceed forth from her, and how sweet is the life and repose of that city where this virtue is cherished, who is more resplendent than any other. She guardeth and defendeth them that honour her, and feedeth and nourisheth them. From her light ariseth praise for those that work well, but pains for the wicked."

The opposite picture of Tyranny (with Avarice, Pride, and Vanity over his head, and Deceit, Treason, Cruelty, Rage, Dissension and War for companions) is a mere contrast to the Good Government fresco and need not detain us. Indeed, in a chapter on Art the description above given of the Good Government frescoes is only in place for the purpose to

which I now propose to put it. You will readily perceive from it how easy it would be for a man with the soul of a preacher and the power of a poet to make these pictures the subject or occasion for a moving disquisition upon the noble ideal of government herein set forth. He might even claim for these frescoes that they are the voice of Siena herself in the days of her virtue and chivalry ; and he might call upon you to admire the comprehensiveness of their ideal, its conformity with the Christian spirit, and its contrast with many visible defects in the popular systems of government of our own day. All this, however, has nothing to do with the frescoes as works of Art. Given the scheme, which might have been drawn up by a blind philosopher, it could be well painted or badly painted without in anywise altering its character as an illustration of a theory of government. As a matter of fact it is not very well painted. There are good figures in the frescoes ; some, such as the Peace, are really beautiful. But the whole collection of figures

are not grouped into a fine pictorial whole. The frescoes are not pleasing to the eye. Interesting they may be ; beautiful they are not.

The fact is that a picture one can describe is not likely to be a good picture. If the actual description of a picture makes interesting reading, the picture itself is not likely to please. Take any of the beautiful pictures of the world and try to describe it, you will find that your description, however well expressed, may contain everything except the very qualities whereby the picture pleases. If you are a poet you may write a poem on a kindred subject to that treated by the painter, but you cannot write it on the painter's subject, and even if you could your poem would please, not as describing the picture but by its own separate artistic qualities. The reason why I have ventured to describe the Good Government frescoes at such unconscionable length is to demonstrate thereby the difference between good morals and good Art. Whatever parts of the pictures can be thus

directly translated into words are no part of their pictorial quality, of what makes them or should make them works of Art. The moment the eye is turned from all the cords and emblems to the fair figure of Peace the difference becomes obvious. We may say that she is fair and has a quantity of hair, that she is leaning back and clothed in a simple robe, and that such and such emblems are attached to her, but a glance at the figure shows that her charm is in none of these details, and depends in no wise upon what she means, but is in such beauty as the painter has availed to endow her with.

Granted that the pictures are fine as pictures, they are none the worse for carrying any charge of symbolism they can be made to carry ; but if they are bad as pictures they are not redeemed by being laden with a ponderous moral, however admirable. The quality fundamentally necessary to a picture is that it be beautifully painted, lovely to look upon, and that whatever message it has to bear it shall carry pictorially. The sight of beauty

is itself enough for a painter to behold and transmit. Who that has gazed at a sunset can deny it? The sunset behind Turner's "Fighting Temeraire towed to her last moorings" is proof enough. It may be symbolically introduced, but that does not make it good. It is the beauty of the sunset and its harmony with the other parts of the picture that is its glory. The symbolism is well enough in addition, but only in addition. The beauty, not the symbolism, is the painter's subject.

In these reflections I speak as a modern man, for we look at old pictures with modern eyes. We must, however, remember that in their day such pictures, whether good or bad in themselves, had a real utility. Artists then had neither the skill nor the experience that came later. They had not discovered by trial, as they presently did, what could be painted and what could not. Some, like Simone, instinctively felt the limitation of their powers. Ambitious spirits were not so temperate and had to learn by failure. To this

point we must return hereafter. The consideration I have still to enforce is that such emblematic pictures were of use when they were painted. The men of that day looked at pictures much as children do now ; and we know how children will find entertainment and meanings in the worst pictures. An excellent example of the effect of pictures upon men of action is recorded by a fifteenth century chronicler. He says that when Richard the Second's uncles, the Dukes of Gloucester and Lancaster, came to negotiate a peace between England and France with the uncles of the French King, the ambassadors "chose for meeting-place a thatched chapel of poor appearance near the ruined village of Lelingen, between Calais and Boulogne. . . . To hide the aged condition of the chapel walls the Duc de Berri had caused woollen tapestries to be hung all round, representing divers ancient battles. But after the first interview the Duke of Lancaster caused them to be removed, saying that men seeking for peace should not have pictures of combats and the destruction

of towns before their eyes. So these tapestries were replaced by other gold embroideries representing the chief incidents in the Passion of our Lord Jesus, and the Duke much approved of the change."

It is difficult for us, nowadays, to imagine the deliberations of, say, the Berlin Congress affected by pictures on the walls of the Congress Chamber. Men of the fifteenth, and still more their predecessors of the fourteenth, century must have taken the subjects of pictures seriously to heart, if the removal of a set of warlike tapestries from a Council Chamber and the substitution of religious subjects was matter worth an envoy's attention. It may well have been the case, therefore, that frescoes, such as the Good and Bad Government series in the Hall of the Nine at Siena, had a practical utility at the time they were painted, and were calculated to affect the deliberations of the Committee of Government that sat beneath them. If it were so, the historical student cannot afford to neglect other allegorical pictures painted in prominent positions at the

time. Even if their subjects are not, properly speaking, any part of Art, they are exponents of the temper and ideals of the time by which the development of Art was likewise conditioned.

These large schemes of pictured allegory did, however, in one way directly affect artists, for they posed an entirely new problem to them. As long as painters were only called upon to depict incidents in the Sacred History or the old legends, they were treading a well-beaten path. The same was true with pictures of the Madonna, the Saints, and other the like normal subjects. Even if they were called upon to depict a new legend, such as those of St. Francis, St. Dominic, or St. Anthony of Padua, the incidents to be represented were not unlike in kind to those of older legends. But when an artist was called upon for Allegories, he was invited to launch forth upon an untried sea. Giotto's Allegories of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience in the Lower Church of Assisi were some of the first pictures of importance of this character. In painting

them he manifested another kind of resource from that which enabled him to triumph over the difficulties of the Francis legend. At Padua, again, his figures of the Virtues and Vices give further proof of his imaginative powers as applied to pictorial allegory. We discover similar qualities in the allegorical sculptures, designed by him or under his oversight, for the decoration of the Florentine Campanile.

None of these works, however, were so complex in idea as the Good and Bad Government series. There the scheme was minutely determined, and its threads of thought, as it were, plaited intricately together. It is impossible not to praise the designer's skill or the nobility of his conception. The trouble was that the design was in its essence not pictorial but literary. It was a stupendous task for an artist to take such a complicated scheme and express, or rather translate, it into pictorial form. It is not surprising that the result was not a complete success. The effort, however, was good, not merely for the artist but for the

development of Art. Whilst at Florence the followers of Giotto were painting their interminable repetitions of legend-illustrations, more or less in the style of their master, at Siena we find a new problem posed, a new inventiveness stimulated.

Sienese painters were the men at that time most likely to arrive at the true solution. Only by means of scrolls and emblems can a symbolic picture be made to convey its recondite meaning, unless indeed the symbolic figures have so often been used and are of so well-known an appearance that they have grown to be ideographs. A painter called upon to depict a new kind of allegory must fall back upon inscriptions or their equivalent to indicate his drift. That being the case his problem is simplified. He has only to paint figures of types that will be seen to harmonize with the idea they are intended to express when the spectator has been told their meaning. He may group these figures as he pleases, but he must not demand too much power of riddle-guessing from the spectator. The simpler the

grouping the better. In fact, the whole work being symbolical the grouping may as well be architectural.

We are thus led to the conclusion that for artists of an early date, disposing only of small technical powers, a big allegorical painting is likely to be most effective if architecturally treated. Its main artistic virtue therefore must be decoration. What we have first to enquire, as Art students, about such paintings as Giotto's Allegories at Assisi, these Government frescoes at Siena, the frescoes in the Spanish Chapel at Florence, or those in the Campo Santo at Pisa, is, are they decorative? Do they beautify the places where they are painted? If they do the artist has succeeded; if they do not he has failed. As moralists or social historians we may proceed to enquire whether the paintings embody a fine scheme of religious or philosophic thought. We may discover that the pictures, though undecorative and bad as paintings, do embody impressive dogma, and that in that respect they are noteworthy. That, however, will

not make them good pictures. Or we may find that though decorative and charming to look at their allegorical significance is feeble ; that will not make them artistically poor.

Sienese painters, as we have seen, possessed an excellent decorative tradition. Some of them underwent Florentine influence and became dramatic, but the school as a whole remained primarily decorative. It was therefore better suited, as a school, than the Florentine to deal with allegorical and symbolical subjects. We shall hereafter see that the best fourteenth century allegorical fresco was painted in the Sienese style, but before approaching a consideration of that work we must learn something of the society for which it was painted—the great Dominican Order.

CHAPTER V.

THE EFFECT OF THE DOMINICANS UPON ART IN
THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

THUS far, in sketching the movements that determined the development of Italian Art from the eleventh to the fourteenth century, almost nothing has been said about the rise and power of the Dominican Order of Preaching Friars. We have taken the Franciscans as special exponents, in religion, of the popular movement of the thirteenth century. As students of Art-History we could not do otherwise. It was at Assisi that the new tendencies in Art made their first notable appearance in Italy. It was the personality of Francis that attracted popular attention. It was his words the folk remembered, his

deeds they related, his spirit they admired. The Franciscans popularised the new preaching style which supplied Giotto and his followers with the subjects of their pictures. The legend of Francis himself was essentially picturesque. Thus early fourteenth century Art could not but receive the impress of Franciscanism.

The Dominicans, whose business it was to uphold orthodoxy of faith in a transitional age, when so-called popular heresies were rife, actually fulfilled a useful function. That they did so is proved both by their popularity and their continued existence. They were no mushroom organization, but a strong product of the needs and tendencies of their day. They were not a picturesque group like the Franciscans, but they were useful, especially as educationalists. Being useful they grew in numbers and wealth. The time came when they had money to spare to spend on Art. Just as the Franciscans, when they first wanted paintings, had to employ the old classical and Greek painters to make them ; so the Dominicans

in their turn had to employ the painters who had been moulded by Franciscan influence. The earliest Dominican paintings, therefore, are of Franciscan character.

The first paintings required by a Franciscan house were illustrations of the Bible History and the Life of Francis, both rich in picturesque subjects. There are indications in predellas of Dominican altar-pieces and elsewhere that the Dominicans tried to set up Dominic as a rival to Francis in this respect also. Now Dominic may have been a remarkable man, but he was not a picturesque personality. He was poor material for the legend makers. Legends as naturally gathered about the memory of Francis as butterflies gather upon flowers; but Dominic was a man of another sort. It must have been hard work, even in a credulous day, to make men swallow a miraculous Dominic legend. The work, however, was done as well as it could be. Dominic was provided with a set of miracles to match those of Francis. Did a Pope dream that he saw Francis supporting the tottering edifice of the

Church? A similar dream was related in which the place of Francis was taken by Dominic. It was hopeless to make Dominic preach to birds or have seraphic visions, but he could be credited with enough miracles of the commonplace sort to make a decent show, resuscitations of people apparently dead, healings of sick, and the like.

Sets of pictures of the Dominican legend were thus painted under Franciscan influence and rivalry, but it seems clear that they attained no popularity. They did not catch on. By degrees even the figure of Dominic receded into the background, and his place was taken by Peter Martyr or Thomas Aquinas. Peter Martyr was more picturesque, Thomas Aquinas more splendid. The figure of Dominic, as the eponymous Saint of the Order, appeared in saintly assemblages, in paradises, and on altar-pieces of the Virgin and Saints as long as such pictures were painted, but from the end of the first third of the fourteenth century Dominic yields the front pictorial position to Thomas Aquinas.

What pictures of the Crucifixion were to Christianity as a whole, that the representation of St. Francis receiving the Stigmata was to the Franciscans. It was the central Franciscan emblem. The Dominicans could not adopt any corresponding translation of the Crucifixion into the language of their order. For a long time they lacked such an emblem in any form. At last they adopted one in the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas." The representation of the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas" bore to the Transfiguration the relation that "St. Francis receiving the Stigmata" bore to the Crucifixion. It was a Dominican reflexion of one of the chief appearances upon earth of Christ as God. That the resemblance was no mere chance similarity is evident the moment we compare an early picture of the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas" with a Byzantine representation of the Transfiguration, such as may be found on the beautiful mosaic tablets now in the Cathedral Museum at Florence. There Christ is raised on high with Moses on one hand, Elias on the

other, and the three disciples at His feet. Bright rays unite Him to the two Prophets and the three Apostles. Compare this with Traini's picture of the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas" (1345) in the Church of St. Catherine at Pisa.*

In the midst, raised in the air and of colossal size, sits the Angelic Doctor, surrounded by circles of glory and with a nimbus about his head. Christ is above, among the seraphs, leaning over from the starry firmament towards him. Three rays of inspiration—*lumen naturale*, *lumen gratiæ*, *lumen gloriæ*—proceed from the mouth of Christ and fall upon St. Thomas' head. Others, falling upon the heads of Moses and the Evangelists, are likewise reflected on to the head of Thomas from the volumes of their writings held in their hands. Aristotle and Plato stand on either side of the Saint, but drawn on a smaller scale ; they receive no rays of divine illumination but they cast rays, not towards the brow

* The same subject was painted in the cloister of St. Maria Novella at Florence by Stefano Florentino ; only traces of the picture exist.

but the mouth of the Doctor—Aristotle from the Ethics, Plato from the *Timæus*. Aquinas holds open upon his knees a volume of his writings. We know it to be the *Summa contra gentiles*, of which this picture may be called an illustration or rather an emblem. On the open pages of the book we read: “My mouth shall speak truth and my lips shall detest the impious man.” The rest of his books lie open upon his knees. Inspiring rays strike downwards upon the heads of his followers standing below on both sides. At the bottom of the picture, in a vacant space under the feet of the Saint, lies a turbaned philosopher, puzzled and angry in countenance. A book, face downwards on the ground, pierced by a ray from the book of Aquinas, lies by his side. This is Averroes, the impious man detested by the lips of the Doctor, and his book is his famous Great Commentary.

The “Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas” may have been suggested by Giotto’s Assisi fresco of the “Glory of St. Francis.” That, how-

ever, merely depicts St. Francis on a throne in heaven surrounded by angels, a picture of the direct Franciscan sort. This of Aquinas is conceived in a totally different, and, as we shall see, a characteristically Dominican fashion. It is throughout emblematic. It does not pretend to depict an event but to symbolise a system of thought. The Franciscans may have introduced allegory into Tuscan Art by the agency of Giotto, but in Giotto's hands it had a direct practical intention. The Allegories of the Franciscan Virtues at Assisi—Poverty, Obedience, Chastity—were intended to influence the friars to follow the example of Francis in those respects. The figures of the Virtues and Vices painted by Giotto at Padua were meant to lead the spectator to choose the one and eschew the other. The allegorical sculptures at the base of Giotto's Campanile were a brief form of narrative statement, suggesting a moral. The character of Dominican pictures was not of this kind. They symbolised a scheme of doctrine. It was their purpose to up-



Alinari, Photo.

Traini.

GLORY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

Pisa.

Facing page 184.



hold orthodoxy and rebuke heresy and infidelity.*

Traini, who painted this picture, was a kinsman of the famous Orcagna. In the year 1357 Orcagna painted an altar-piece for the Strozzi Chapel in St. Maria Novella, the walls of which he was decorating or had already decorated with frescoes. In the midst of the altar-piece Christ is enthroned in a glory of seraph heads. With His right hand He presents the Gospels to St. Thomas Aquinas, with the left He presents the key to Peter. The Virgin, standing behind Aquinas, lays her hand on his shoulder. John Baptist, Michael, Catherine, Paul, and Lawrence are looking on. The

* The chief allegorical pictures of a Dominican character painted during the middle of the fourteenth century are these :—

1. The Allegories of Good and Bad Government, painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Publico at Siena (1337—1340).
2. Traini's picture of the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas" at Pisa (1346).
3. The *Quattuor Novissima* in the Campo Santo at Pisa (c. 1345—1350).
4. The same subjects similarly treated by Orcagna in the cloister of St. Croce at Florence (c. 1345—1355) now destroyed.
5. Frescoes in the Spanish Chapel of St. Maria Novella at Florence (c. 1350—1360).
6. Orcagna's frescoes (c. 1355—1360) and altar-piece (1357) in the Strozzi Chapel of the same church.

Dominicans have here raised their philosopher to highest rank, giving him precedence even over Peter. Aquinas is made to represent the Church's doctrine as Peter stands for its government. Traini made Aquinas more important than Moses and the Evangelists. Orcagna gives him precedence to Peter. In the window of this same chapel it is Aquinas, not Dominic, that illuminates the image of the Church. Henceforward in Dominican Art he occupies the chief place. In honouring him the Dominicans felt that they honoured themselves. They settled upon St. Thomas Aquinas to be the rival of St. Francis, and they were wise in their choice. Dominic was impossible for that purpose.

Let us now return to the picture of the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas." Who was this Averroes* who lies so uncomfortably at the Saint's feet, and why was he so prominently introduced? An answer to this question involves a somewhat long digression, but we shall find it worth making, for we meet

* See Renan's *Averroes et l'Averroïsme*.

with Averroes frequently in Italian Art, and where we find him we may be sure that Dominican influence was operative.

The activity of Averroes (1126-1198), whose true name was Ibn-Roshd, practically coincided with the last half of the twelfth century. He was the latest and most notable of those Mussulman philosophers, living in Spain, who cultivated the philosophy of the Greeks when it had fallen into neglect everywhere else. Averroes' great work was a commentary upon Aristotle. He is known as the Great Commentator. Mussulman philosophers had accepted the Peripatetic system, such as it was known about the seventh century. They commented freely upon it and their commentaries practically developed into a new system. Averroes resumed his predecessors' results in one great work, the Great Commentary. After him the Mussulman school perished, most of its leaders were forgotten, but Averroes remained its chief representative in the memory of posterity.*

* See Renan's *Averroes et l'Averroïsme*.

His system involved two great principles, briefly but inaccurately entitled the Eternity of Matter and the Unity of Souls. All generation, said Averroes, is movement ; movement implies a thing moved, Primitive Matter. This is eternal. It is continually changing, yet with it is neither before nor after. All that is possible *is* in Eternity. Averroes held the Intellect to be twofold : subjective, passive, or potential and objective or active. The passive Intellect is individual and perishable. The active intellect, resident in the sum of things, is one and imperishable. On these theories the Christian opponents of Averroes based their ultimate misrepresentation of him as “the standard-bearer of infidelity.” Yet he never attacked any religion. “The religion of philosophers,” he said, “is the study of what is, for the most sublime worship that can be rendered unto God is the knowledge of His works, leading us, as it does, to know Him in all His reality.”

After the days of Averroes the study of philosophy was mainly carried on by the

Jews, whose importance as an intellectual force in the thirteenth century is often insufficiently remembered. Their international relations and secluded lives were favourable to study. They were the medium of literary circulation at that time. By means of the Jews a work written at Cairo was soon known at Paris or in Spain. They congregated where trade was most profitable, especially therefore in Sicily and Spain, both centres of enlightenment as well as wealth. From Spain Hebrew translations of Averroes found their way to many parts of Europe in the early years of the thirteenth century. Those, as we know, were years of intellectual awakening. The universities were active. It was a time of enquiry, a great age of so-called heresies. The Jews were the booksellers. If men of learning wanted to buy the books of foreign lands they had to go to the Jews to find them. Thus Latin translations of Hebrew translations of the Mussulman commentaries on Greek philosophers began to appear. It was an important movement. "The introduction

of Arabic texts into Western study," writes Renan, "divides the scientific and philosophical history of the Middle Ages into two perfectly distinct epochs. In the first, Martianus Capella and the like were the meagre foundation texts. In the second, ancient science returned westward in the form of Arabic commentaries."

Among the strange lights of this intellectual dawn, Francis, Dominic, and Emperor Frederick II., chiefly catch the eye. The court of Frederick was the centre of the new intellectual life. Men of learning of whatever race or religion were alike welcome there. Under such protection the new philosophy made rapid strides, but patronised by the arch-enemy of the Pope it tended to fall under the ban of the Church. Dominic's followers, organized exponents of orthodoxy, became its chief opponents; yet they were themselves a product of the same intellectual awakening and their schools spread learning throughout Europe. By degrees the philosophers of Europe divided themselves clearly

into two schools: Dominican and anti-Dominican. The name of Thomas Aquinas was the badge of the one, the name of Averroes of the other. At first the opposition to Averroes on the part of the Dominicans was respectful and not embittered. In Dante's day enlightened men viewed in Mahomet the author of a schism, and in Islam an Arian sect. Dante was strongly opposed to the doctrines of Averroes, yet he placed him in a region of peace and melancholy repose along with Euclid, Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna, and other great men, "*Spiriti magni, che di vederli in me stesso n'esalto.*" Three Councils in the first quarter of the thirteenth century incidentally condemned Averroes' doctrines, but did not arrest their advance. The Universities of Paris and Oxford and a school of philosophers that grew up within the Franciscan body became their strongholds. The contest between the rival schools grew more bitter as years went by.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was at once

the greatest disciple and the most powerful antagonist of the system of Averroes. He respected him as interpreter of Aristotle ; he abhorred him as representative of materialism. Yet it is clear that on the whole he esteemed him as a wise Pagan worthy at least of pity. By the end of the thirteenth century, however, the name of Averroes had become to the orthodox the badge of unorthodoxy. It was presently employed as a mere symbol of ignorant and perverse infidelity. Legend gave form to slander. It was related that Averroes wrote a book describing Moses, Christ, and Mahomet as Three Impostors. Thenceforward Thomas Aquinas became the Dominican symbol for orthodoxy, the champion of the Christian faith ; Averroes became the symbol of infidelity, and even of utter Atheism. That is why in the picture of the "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas" we find Averroes overthrown at his feet and the Grand Commentary transfixated by a ray of light from the *Summa contra gentiles*. In other pictures of the same subject—and they

were once numerous—we find Averroes associated with other heretics, such as Arius or Sabellius; but Averroes is always the chief—the overthrown protagonist of Dominican foes. When, therefore, in any picture of the Last Judgment or of Hell, we find Averroes selected for prominent condemnation, or placed in the hottest circle of punishment, we may be certain that the painter was working under Dominican supervision and expressing Dominican ideas.

We are now in a position to approach the study of three important groups of frescoes, surviving representatives of many more of the same, character that have been destroyed. They are the frescoes in the Spanish Chapel and the Strozzi Chapel in S. Maria Novella at Florence, and those of the *Quattuor Novissima* (Four Last Things, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell) in the Campo Santo at Pisa.

The Strozzi Chapel frescoes were painted by Orcagna; we do not know for certain who painted the others, nor is it material that we

should. Most of them suggest Sienese hands. It is worthy of general remark that as Giotto and the early Florentines were characteristically Franciscan, so the early Sienese had a Dominican tendency. The frescoes of Good and Bad Government might well have been included, perhaps ought to be included, among the purely Dominican pictures. It has been suggested that the painter of them and of part of the Pisan *Quattuor Novissima* series was one and the same. The fact is that subjects of the Dominican type were well suited to be handled by artists of the rather impersonal, decorative, Sienese school, whilst narrative illustrations were correspondingly better adapted for the dramatic Florentines who followed Giotto.

The decoration of the Spanish Chapel was paid for by Buonamico di Lapo Guidalotti. When he died in 1355 it was not finished. Orcagna's Strozzi Chapel frescoes are believed to have been complete in 1357; they were therefore approximately contemporary with the Spanish Chapel. The Pisan *Quattuor Novissima* may be a little later; the Good and

Bad Government frescoes were earlier. It is safe to assign all four groups to between 1340 and 1360. The Spanish Chapel was the Chapter-House of the great Florentine Dominican Convent. It was properly decorated with pictures illustrative of the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. The subjects are said to have been chosen by Fra Jacopo Passavanti, a learned Dominican. Of the two main walls, that on the left illustrates the *Summa theologica*, that on the right Aquinas's commentary on the *Canticum Canticorum*, called from its opening words, "*Sonet vox tua in auribus meis.*"

The *Summa theologica* fresco consists of a "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas" above, and two rows of emblematic figures beneath. The latter form the subject of a stimulating and suggestive pamphlet by Ruskin, full of fair thoughts and strong opinions finely expressed. On the other hand Berenson finds them "empty" as allegories and "confused" as compositions. "There is not," he says, "a figure in either which has tactile values—that is to say, artistic existence." Now both

Ruskin and Berenson are to be reckoned as important authorities upon Art, though upon Art regarded from different points of view. Each, I imagine, would be relatively indifferent to the particular quality in a work of Art which the other would regard as of prime importance. Where two such men disagree with a diametrical disagreement, the one praising, the other blaming the same work of Art, it is safe to assume that the one praised it because of certain qualities he saw in it to which the other was not sensitive. We may expect to find those qualities. Similarly the one who blamed found defects to which the other was indifferent. We may assume that the defects likewise exist. No work of Art is without defects; few lack merit. A lover of Art must try to see the merit and pardon the defects.

As already stated, the upper part of the fresco contains a "Glory of St. Thomas Aquinas." The saint is seated on a throne; he is posed and draped in perfect symmetry to indicate his rectitude of character. On the

pages of an open book held upright in his hands are written words from the Book of Wisdom : " I willed and Sense was given me. I prayed and the Spirit of Wisdom came upon me, and I set her before Kingdoms and Thrones." A little figure of Wisdom is in the canopy above him. She holds a mirror for self-inspection and a book. On either side of the throne are seated the great writers of Scripture, on whose books the Angelic Doctor wrote commentaries. They are the Four Evangelists, Paul, Moses, David, Isaiah, Job, and Solomon. The three divine or theological virtues hover over the Saint's head. Highest is Charity, with flaming brow and hands. Faith bears a cross and a shield bristling with the fiery darts it has quenched. Hope stretches forth one hand to heaven and holds a branch of evergreen in the other. Lower down come the four Cardinal Virtues, which according to St. Thomas are philosophical and acquired (not like the three, God-given). Prudence reads in a book ; Temperance bridles a fish, emblem of lust

(Why ?) ; Fortitude has sword and tower ; Justice sword and crown. At the feet of Aquinas are the three arch-heretics, against whose doctrines his polemical treatises were directed ; Arius on one side, Sabellius on the other, the turbaned Averroes in the midst. They are not overthrown, but seated on the ground deep in thought—confuted, perhaps, but not convinced.

This part of the fresco is obviously a later representation of the subject than Traini's picture of 1345. It dispenses with the rays of illumination. It is a better and a more complete composition by a man who had seen or at least heard of the other work. The remainder of the fresco has been interpreted repeatedly and its meaning is now well known. Of the row of fourteen female figures seated under canopies, the seven on the right are the Liberal Arts, the seven on the left the Theological Arts. A historical personage, selected as conspicuous for the particular quality, is seated at the feet of each Art, and there is an emblematic medallion in each canopy.



As has been stated, these fourteen figures symbolically illustrate the *Summa theologica* of St. Thomas, a kind of encyclopædia of doctrine. The author divides all knowledge into two parts, Physical Science which belongs to reason, and Theological Science which belongs to faith. Seven of the fourteen symbolical figures are the Arts of Reason, the other Seven are the Arts of Faith. The Arts of Reason are the customary Seven Liberal Arts, servants, as the *Summa* (1, 2, 65, 2) calls them, of heavenly science. To mark their inferiority their seven exponents are all pagans.

First, on the extreme right, comes Grammar with the Grammarian Donatus. She is instructing children and pointing to the Strait Gate. Rhetoric is next, with Cicero not speaking but meditating; the medallion over her head bears a figure engaged in self-inspection. Dialectic is third, with Aristotle and, in the medallion, a man writing. She is a very pretty figure. A branching rod covered with leaves, held in one hand, represents the Syllogism, a scorpion in the other hand the Dilemma.

Music, crowned with myrtle, plays an organ. The “melodious blacksmith,” Tubal Cain, at her feet, beats his music out energetically enough. This figure is similar in idea to that emblematic of Universal Harmony, last of the series of hexagonal bas-reliefs at the base of Giotto’s Campanile. The fifth Art is Astronomy, science of the seasons, indicated as such by the husbandman with spade and sickle in the medallion. She wears a golden crown, holds an astrolabe, and raises her hand in wonder. Oriental Ptolemy, beneath her, gazes intently up to heaven, noblest in aspect of all the great men here. His neighbour, Euclid, sits at the feet of Geometry, which science includes the art of fortification, and therefore has an armed soldier in her medallion. Last and highest of the Liberal Arts is Arithmetic, with Pythagoras beneath her and a king in her medallion, to show that she is the science of order and government. She is the sprightliest of all the seven, not a science of gloomy calculation but of alert activity.

The Theological Sciences begin with *Lex*

Humana and *Lex Aeterna* (*Summa*, 3, 91), the former represented by Emperor Justinian, whose code was the basis of mediæval Justice, the latter by Pope Clement V., by whom the laws of the Church were collected together. Civil law holds her naked sword perfectly level in one hand and the orb of the world in the other. Canon law holds the model of a church. Practical and Speculative Theology are the next pair, almost equivalent to Franciscanism and Dominicanism. Practical Theology holds a picture of Christ preaching the Sermon on the Mount and has almsgiving depicted in her medallion. Speculative Theology (the *Devotio* of *Summa* 2, 2, 82) is accompanied by Contemplation in the person of the meditative philosopher at her feet, and by inner satisfaction (*lætitia*) symbolised in the medallion by a mother rejoicing over her babe. The last three figures are Faith, Hope, and Charity again; not as above, the virtues of an individual man, but the qualities of a doctrinal system. Faith's three-pointed crown symbolises the Trinity, she lifts her hand to

heaven, and holds a vessel on her knee, apparently a clumsy emblem of the supplies she draws from spiritual fountains—the only clumsy piece of symbolism in the whole fresco, unless my interpretation of it is wrong. Hope is robed in white and wears a hawking glove, a symbol as happy as it was novel. She looks upwards and raises her hands—expression and gesture charming and most apt. Charity, accompanied by St. Augustine, is clothed in seraphic red. She wears a close red cap with a cross for crest, and carries a bow and arrow, like any Cupid, an emblem of obvious interpretation. This is the divine love, whereof Plato speaks, “bestowed by the beneficence of the Gods and acceding to the minds of men through the inspiration of celestial Cupid.”

The division of the roof above this fresco is fitly occupied by a fresco of Pentecost, in accordance with the words of the *Summa* (1, 2, 68, 2): “Unless the Holy Spirit continually prompts and impels the reason, the reason is not of itself sufficient to attain the

ultimate supernatural end, towards which it tends, when in any degree and imperfectly directed by the Theological Virtues." It is worth notice that this vaulting fresco, representing as it does a purely historical subject, is frankly Giottoesque and Florentine, in contrast with the Sienese character of the emblematic fresco beneath it.

As I have before remarked, that part of the symbolism and subject of a picture which can be translated into words is no part of its pictorial quality—of what makes it a work of art. The fresco we are discussing undoubtedly is built upon a fine intellectual idea ; what we are now interested to enquire is whether it is a fine work of art, apart from its symbolical and emblematic qualities. Mr. Berenson has attacked it on what seem to me false grounds. He says : " Is there a single figure in the fresco representing the 'Triumph of St. Thomas' which incarnates the idea it symbolises, which, without its labelling instrument, would convey any meaning whatever ? One pretty woman holds a globe and sword,

and I am required to feel the majesty of empire ; another has painted over her pretty clothes a bow and arrow, which are supposed to rouse me to a sense of the terrors of war ;* a third has an organ on what was intended to be her knee, and the sight of this instrument must suffice to put me into ecstasies of heavenly music ; still another pretty lady has her arm akimbo, and if you want to know what edification she can bring, you must read her scroll. Below these pretty women sit a number of men looking as worthy as clothes and beards can make them ; one highly dignified old gentleman gazes *with all his heart and all his soul* † at—the point of his quill.”

If I had not so high an opinion as I possess

* The bow and arrow are in the hands of Charity.

† The italics are mine. If the painter has succeeded in putting all a man’s heart and soul into a gaze he must indeed be a painter worth note. As a matter of fact this attitude of a man in thought, gazing at his pen, is an attempt at naturalism. The gesture is not original with this artist. It will be found in an altar-piece (No. 24) in the Academy at Venice painted by Michele di Matteo Lambertini, who, curiously enough, worked at Siena about 1449—50. It is also found in early German pictures (one of the Prague school at Vienna), and is, I think, an old traditional attitude, well understood to suggest a thoughtful writer.

of the excellence and value of Mr. Berenson's work I should not select this passage for refutation. It is only a writer whose words justly carry weight that needs to be opposed when we differ from him. The gist of Mr. Berenson's attack on our fresco is that unless we know what the figures are intended to represent we should not be able to guess. He implies a contrast with Giotto's allegorical figures of the Vices at Padua, which are self-explaining to a certain degree. The contrast, however, is between things dissimilar. The Vices are human passions and therefore easily prefigurable, because we carry the interpretation in ourselves. We know an angry man when we see one; we know the aspect of Avarice. Yet no one, I think, would have named Giotto's Inconstancy if he had met with the picture alone and unlabelled. The figure is an ugly illustration of the idea of inconstancy, but the vice has to be named before we can discover that the figure is emblematic of it. The fact is that all emblematic pictures and other works of art

presuppose in the spectator a knowledge of the thing prefigured. It was so, for instance, with the sculpture in the pediments of the Parthenon. The figures held emblems and were identified by them. If we knew no more about Greek mythology than we do about that of the Incas, we should no more be able to guess what the Parthenon pediments mean than we can guess at the meaning of Inca pottery. As it is, there are some three dozen or more different interpretations of this sculpture, yet no one considers that fact an indication of artistic poverty. The Parthenon sculptures are fine works of art, apart from their meaning, and are immediately perceived to be fine by anyone capable of appreciating them, even if he has no shadow of an idea what they are all about.

The painter of the Spanish Chapel fresco did not mean the spectator of his work to feel the majesty of empire when he looked at a sword and crown, or to be inspired with ecstasies of heavenly music by the sight of an organ. He was not painting to please the

modern man at all. He was addressing Dominican friars of the fourteenth century, men learned in the wisdom of Thomas Aquinas and intensely proud of that philosopher as one of themselves. Not a man amongst the friars who assembled in the Chapter House of St. Maria Novella but knew the *Summa Theologica* well enough to grasp the meaning of the fresco at a glance. All the painter had to do from the intellectual side was to suggest the scheme of the work by a series of emblematic figures, obscure perhaps to us but of obvious meaning to the friars of that day. As an artist his main duty was to decorate a wall—to cover it with pleasant forms and colours nicely grouped together. That the forms and colours of the fresco are petty Mr. Berenson admits. As a scheme of decoration it seems to me admirable. In fact, the Spanish Chapel as a whole is the best example of an interior decorated by fresco that the fourteenth century has sent down to the twentieth, and the wall we have been considering is the best part of it. Mr. Berenson says that not a figure on

it possesses "tactile values—that is to say, artistic existence"; but if the whole be decorative, the whole, and therefore the parts, have artistic existence. The fresco might not be decorative and yet it might have merits. Michael Angelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling is not decorative in its present condition, yet it is a superb work of art. If, on the other hand, this fresco is decorative we are dispensed from further enquiry. Its prime duty was to decorate. It accomplishes that duty. As a matter of fact it accomplishes much more. It incorporates an emblematic scheme with great ingenuity. It translates into pictorial form, or rather it finds truly pictorial equivalents for, a number of philosophical and religious ideas. Fill your minds with the kind of understanding about Thomas Aquinas and his system which a Dominican friar of the fourteenth century may be assumed to have had, and then go and sit before the picture, you will find it not merely suggestive, but you will find that the painting itself, in its treatment as well as its design, matches your

Dominican mood, just as music suitably composed accompanies the song for which it was designed to be a setting.

As an allegorical painting this Spanish Chapel fresco of St. Thomas and his doctrine surpasses the frescoes of Good and Bad Government ; but though probably later in date it does not surpass the *Quattuor Novissima* (c. 1340-1350) of the Pisan Campo Santo, to which our attention must now be turned. Copies of them, with some alterations, are said to have been made by Orcagna in the cloister of Santa Croce (c. 1345-1355), but they no longer exist. It was probably for this reason that the Pisan frescoes were at one time wrongly ascribed to that painter. Who actually painted them we do not know. It is clear that he worked under Dominican influence, for we find Averroes in the very hottest corner of Hell along with Mahomet and Antichrist. Moreover, the group of people whom Death is about to mow down are obviously designed by the same designer who was responsible for the fresco on the

right wall of the Spanish Chapel. Both groups of frescoes, in fact, belong to the same school of design.

Who that has ever beheld them does not remember these Pisan frescoes, especially the one popularly known as the Triumph of Death? Who does not recall that weird irresistible figure—clothed in a black gauze garment and borne on large bat-like wings, sweeping onward, over her prey, brandishing a scythe broad of blade? Her mouth is open uttering “a great and bitter cry.” Her long white hair is like a raging flame. The points of her fingers, toes, and wings are sharp claws. Her cheeks are hollow; her eyes large in the sockets; deep are the wrinkles in her powerful neck. Her skin is tawny; her wings dark green. Her expression is relentless, but neither angry nor malicious. She appears unconscious of the sorrow she causes; prayers do not affect her. She sweeps onward like a hurricane, strewing ruin, and that nothing avails to turn aside. Beneath her are the princes, courtiers, knights, and judges she has

slain. Overhead, devils and angels fight for their souls. Behind her are the cripples and miserable of the earth who cry, "Fortune has abandoned us; come then Death, medicine for every care, oh, come and give us the last meal!" But she hears not, nor turns. Her scythe is about to cut down a group of courtiers, sitting under pomegranate trees with their pet animals and their music. Next to fall will be two lovers over whose heads two cupids hover, grouped like the genii holding scrolls carved upon so many Roman sarcophagi.

An inscription tells the meaning of this part of the picture: "Nought availeth wisdom and riches, nobility and prowess for defence against the blows of this one. Against her, oh reader, was never yet argument found. Wherefore be thou firmly minded to stand ever so prepared that deadly sin bring thee not under her yoke."

The left half of the fresco enforces the same moral in a different way. It contrasts the life of the courtier with the contemplative life

of hermits, dwelling in the country among tame birds and beasts, where even the fawns kneel to be milked. We are shown the weird old tale of Macarius, which arose in France in the thirteenth century and spread all over Europe, so that pictures of it existed in almost every town. As three kings and their courtiers were riding out hawking they came upon the open coffins of three dead kings. A voice cried to them, "What ye are that were we ; what we are that shall ye be."

As a work of Art the left half of the picture is much inferior to the right. The right half is symbolical, the left narrative, and no better than the common run of narrative illustrations that the Giottists produced in such monotonous profusion. But the figure of Death is very fine, probably the finest emblematic figure painted in mediæval Europe up to that date. I have endeavoured to describe it, but the figure transcends any description. It is a painter's conception. It cannot be translated into language, but must be seen. It requires no emblem to explain it, beyond the living

ahead and the dead beneath. It is the conception of a man who felt the horror of death with true mediæval emphasis. In the year 1348 the neighbouring city of Siena was ravaged by plague. Eighty thousand citizens are said to have died of it. It is more than probable that this picture was painted about that time and under the shadow of that terror. The painter may himself have been a Sienese. The people of those days conceived of Death as a person. Even Durer, nearly two centuries later, so thought of it. He records that, standing by his mother's bedside, he " beheld how Death smote her three great strokes to the heart," and how " she closed mouth and eyes and departed with pain." In the year of the Pest at Nuremburg he drew a figure of the King of Terrors, armed with a scythe and wrote beneath it the words, " Remember me."

This Death, the triumphant, therefore, was not a mere emblem to the folk of those days. It was the image of a mighty personal power, very near at hand, very terrible. It took

this form in the painter's imagination. He painted no laboriously constructed emblematic figure, but a demon that he had beheld in his mind's eye. Hence the vitality and power of the picture, rising far beyond mere decoration into the regions of positive creation. Technically, the whole picture has faults enough ; they are not worth naming, for they do not cloud the vivid impression which the work, as a whole, produces even on a modern spectator. What the painter conceived, so clearly that he may be said to have beheld it, we also behold in the presence of his picture. His technical powers sufficed for that transference. It is their ample justification.

We have left ourselves no time to deal with the neighbouring frescoes of the Last Judgment and Hell ; neither can we pause over the corresponding works of Orcagna (c. 1355-1360) in the Strozzi Chapel. An examination of them would only confirm the conclusions we have already reached. The important historical facts to remember are these. At the end of the thirteenth century

artists, under the influence of the Franciscan movement, or in accordance with the popular feeling of which that movement was another expression, looked at Nature in a new way and introduced into Art the expression of a new ideal. They painted dramatic pictures, representations of life as vivid as their powers enabled them to produce. The impulse to further development of this kind of Art-production failed shortly after the death of Giotto, and was succeeded by an impulse of a different kind. In response to the demands of communities inspired by the Dominican ideal, pictures were then painted of an allegorical character, representing systems of thought. In order to produce such pictures artists were obliged to treat their subject in a new way. The traditions of Giotto did not suffice. New artistic problems required a new solution. The effort thus called for gave an impulse to artistic development. It was perceived that such wall-paintings should be primarily decorative. The first efforts in that direction failed; but ultimately in the Spanish and

Strozzi chapels greater success was obtained. Instead of dividing the wall into a number of rectangular compartments, as Giotto and the narrative painters naturally did, allegorical pictures as naturally spread over the whole area to be decorated. The Spanish Chapel as a decorated interior far surpasses the Arena Chapel at Padua. It is, in fact, the best decorated interior produced after the decay of the Byzantine and classical schools. All later examples of well-decorated interiors, such as the Cambio at Perugia, the Appartamento Borgia at the Vatican, and the like, descend from the Spanish Chapel.

Moreover, the new demands made upon artists enlarged their horizon. A Giottist illustrator of a narrative felt that when he had told his story he had done enough. An artist called upon to paint a figure of Music soon realised that any figure holding a musical instrument was not as good as any other. A pretty figure was essential. Hence, the Spanish Chapel's allegorical figures are all pretty ; the representative men dignified.

Allegory, in fact, introduced the demand for formal beauty. That was its important contribution to artistic development. It was a new demand upon painters and sculptors, and one that could not be fully supplied till the technical resources of Art were much enlarged. Artists were thus led to increase their technical powers, to search for beauty for its own sake. Once they were firmly set upon that road the future of Italian Art was sure.

For Beauty is the true aim of Art. Narrative illustration, allegory, edification, what you please, may be subordinate aims, but cannot be principal if Art is to be great. Had there been no popular movement in the thirteenth century, no change in the class for whom artists worked; had the aristocratic and refined class alone remained the employers of artists, and the classical ideals been adhered to and developed, it seems probable that beauty would sooner have been realised as the artist's aim. By a roundabout route and in process of time the same result

was ultimately arrived at, and with this advantage, that in the meantime the taste of a much larger public was educated to a keen appreciation of beauty. In the full tide of the Renaissance the cultured classes again obtained control of the Art-Fund, but when they did so the works that they caused to be made were a joy not only to themselves but to the great mass of the people of Central and Northern Italy. Love of beauty thus entered the heart of the Italians, where it resides to-day. Will any corresponding movement ever infuse into the mass of English-speaking men and women a similar quality? There is no reason why it should not. All we can assert is that our race as a whole has never yet passed through the stage of popular artistic education which the Italians experienced from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, and which has left an indelible impression upon them.

CHAPTER VI.

FRA ANGELICO.

THE paintings by the Dominican friar, generally known as Fra Angelico, have been found pleasing by men of many periods and casts of thought ; and this, not for their comprehensiveness of conception or splendour of execution, but because through them, as through transparent crystal, a singularly pure, gentle, and holy personality may be clearly perceived. Fra Angelico was born, the son of a certain Pietro, in the year 1387 at Vicchio (between Dicomano and Borgo S. Lorenzo), not far from Vespiignano. His baptismal name was Guido. He had a brother named Benedetto, whether elder or younger we do not know. In the year 1407 both brothers entered the Dominican Convent on the Fiesole

hill, at which time Guido took the name of Giovanni, and presently became known as Fra Giovanni of Fiesole.

The brothers were sent to the novices' training-house at Cortona. Owing to troubles connected with the Papal schism they were kept away from Florence, with the rest of the Dominicans, for ten years. In 1418 they returned to Fiesole, where Fra Angelico lived till 1436. In that year he and his fellows were transferred to the Convent of S. Marco at Florence, which he was destined to make famous, and where he resided till 1445. Then he went to Rome to work for the Pope; and at Rome he died in 1455. His active life, therefore, covers the first half of the fifteenth century, and is naturally divisible into four periods—1408–1418, ten years of novitiate and wandering, in which he learnt his craft; 1418–1436, eighteen years of life at Fiesole; 1436–1445, nine years in Florence; 1445–1455, ten years at Rome. It might be shown that the painter's style passed through four stages of development, almost synchronous

with these periods ; but Fra Angelico is not an artist whose works we study for the sake of their artistic style. He founded no school ; he had few imitators. He is remarkable as the artist who gave to a certain group of ideas their plainest and most lovely expression ; his works, therefore, may be considered most profitably as a whole.

Vasari's life of him is one of the most charming of the biographies he has preserved for us. It may have been written by some friar, who knew the artist personally, or it may merely incorporate the tradition handed down in the Convent of San Marco. It contains the following well-known passage : —

“ *Fra Giovanni was a simple man and most holy in his walk. He shunned all things of this world, lived a pure and saintly life, and was such a friend to the poor that I think his soul must now be in Heaven. He exercised himself continually in painting, but would depict none but sacred subjects. He might have been, but cared not to be rich, saying*

that true riches consist alone in being content with a little. He might have commanded many and would not, saying that it was less wearisome and difficult to obey others. He had choice of positions of dignity, both among the Dominicans and elsewhere, yet he esteemed them not, affirming that he sought no other dignity save to escape Hell and draw nigh unto Paradise. . . . He was most humane and sober, and by his virtuous life he freed himself from the snares of the world. He used oftentimes to say that one who is an artist has need of quiet and of a life without care, and that he who paints the things of Christ with Christ should continually abide. Amongst the friars he was never seen in anger. . . . Quietly smiling he was wont to admonish his friends. To anyone desiring a work of him he used to answer, with wonderful meekness, that he must first get the prior's consent, and then if he came to him he would not fail him. In fine this father, who cannot be over-praised, was most humble and modest in all his works and discourse and in his

painting both skilful and devout. The saints which he painted have more the bearing and similitude of saints than have those made by anyone else. It was his custom never to mend or retouch any painting of his, but to leave it always as it came at the first attempt, believing (as he used to say) that such was the will of God. Some relate that Fra Giovanni would not put hand to pencil without first giving himself to prayer. He never painted Christ on the Cross but his cheeks were bathed in tears. So it came to pass that the warm Christian faith of his great and sincere mind was manifest in the faces and attitudes of the figures he painted."

Upon this tender and devout personality the Dominican system of thought was imposed by education. The religious tendency of Giovanni's mind must have been fixed in his earliest youth. His works prove it. They are the works of a man unacquainted with vice and devoid of passion; one whose heart was by nature so pure that he scarcely ex-

perienced the power of ordinary temptations. There is no trace of a conflict to be discovered, no sign of victory, no scar, no weariness, no memory even of temporary repulse. From childhood up to old age was one slow, continuous advance in character as in Art, along an unwavering line. Arrived at the age of twenty, when the tendencies of his nature had declared themselves, it was to the Dominicans that he was drawn ; it was in that order he looked to find pleasant companionship and right direction. His mind, submissive by nature, may have craved for strong governance, for an initiative power from without, and for protection from a tumultuous world. He fled to the Dominicans for shelter. Among the rank and file of the friars there were doubtless plenty of simple and devout men, who lived their lives in quiet and seclusion, and have left no mark on history. Of the noisy and disreputable friars we hear enough ; but if the Dominican body had consisted mainly of such gentry it would not have endured as long as it has done.

Where and from whom Fra Angelico learnt his Art are questions of minor importance, though of obvious interest. There seems little doubt that his master was Don Lorenzo Monaco, a painter of far less merit than his follower, but somewhat similar spirit. It may be assumed that Fra Angelico was already acquainted with the rudiments of his Art when, at the age of twenty, he joined the Dominicans. All his life he remained a learner. His pictures to the last show a continual increase of technical knowledge. He was evidently influenced by the great Masaccio, more evidently by Masolino. If he prepared for painting for prayer, he prepared also by study. He did not neglect the opportunities of improvement that came in his way ; and they were many at a time when Ghiberti was modelling and casting his great gates, when Brunelleschi was manifesting his genius in a new style of architecture, and when Donatello was revolutionising sculpture. But Fra Angelico adopted only such qualities in the new style as were suited to express his own ideal.

Where archaism was essential to the exposition of that ideal he remained archaic.

We may well believe that he likewise nourished his soul with all the spiritual sustenance that the day afforded. His was a day of passionate life, resentful of religious control, yet sometimes passionately yielding to it. The religious orders underwent rapid alternations of degradation and revival. The Franciscans, for instance, had fallen away from the freshness of their first enthusiasm, and become to a great extent worldly and corrupt. When Fra Angelico was still a young man, Bernardino of Siena began his missionary wanderings through Italy, wherein he rivalled St. Francis himself in the popular fervour he awakened. Doubtless the painter heard him preach, perhaps at Florence in 1424. If he did, he must have recognised in the Franciscan revivalist a man of like character to himself. A similar spirit animates many of the recorded sermons of St. Bernardino and the pictures of Fra Angelico. Yet there will be recognised a difference between them, the

abiding difference between Franciscan and Dominican. The Franciscan used legendary subjects and historical incidents of holy lives as an example. "Go thou and do likewise" was his moral. For the Dominican an event was emblematic of a dogma. The one preached Works, the other Faith. Fra Angelico as a painter treated his subjects as a Dominican preacher treated his texts, not as a Franciscan. Herein lay the great difference in point of view between him and Giotto.

Let us take as instance the great Crucifixion fresco, painted by the friar on the Chapter-house wall in that enchanting museum of his works, the Convent of San Marco, where he spent nine of the best years of his life. We may compare it with Giotto's fresco of the same subject, or rather called by the same name, in the Lower Church at Assisi.

Fra Angelico depicts Christ on the Cross between the Two Thieves, with the Virgin below, fainting in the arms of John the Evangelist and two of the Maries. These figures are introduced in their historical grouping in

order to recall, though not to depict, an historic event. It is not the object of the picture (as it was Giotto's object) to bring the actual scene at Calvary before a spectator's eye. What Fra Angelico desired to embody is the spiritual significance of the event. He meant to show that all the religious orders of the day, and his own Convent amongst the number, were branches of one Church, whose life was drawn from the Divine Sacrifice, symbolised by the Crucifixion of Christ. The remaining figures in the fresco are not, therefore, for a moment to be imagined as physically present at Calvary; they are merely depicted as contemplating and accepting the fundamental dogma of Christianity. Of the figures on the left, John Baptist stands as immediate forerunner of Christ and as patron and representative of Florence. St. Mark is there as immediate after-runner and historian (therefore holding the book of his Gospel), and as patron and representative of the Convent (therefore kneeling). St. Laurence was a favourite saint in the Medici family, and Saints

Cosmo and Damiano were the patrons of Cosmo de' Medici, who restored the Convent and used to make retreats within its walls.

The double row of figures on the right includes the founders or leaders of the great religious orders. They symbolise the Church as a body of worshippers, because they were chief amongst those men who professionally consecrated their lives to worship. Foremost, of course, is the kneeling Dominic, with smooth open brow, passionless mouth, mild dark eyes, and clothed in simplest but most expressive drapery. Peter Martyr, the Dominican who died for his faith, and Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican who lived and wrote for it, are likewise introduced into these representative ranks. Then come Augustine, Jerome, Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Anthony, and so forth—each as type of some different class of men, yet all imbued with a common spirit of devotion. There are no landscape accessories, save the dark and bloodshot sky. For a picture of this emblematic kind landscape accessories would have been superfluous.

It is not, let me repeat, a representation of an historical event, but an emblem of the Redemption of the world and man's thankfulness therefor. Had the hills of Judea or the walls of Jerusalem been introduced they would be out of place, as localising that which has no locality but is of universal significance.

The ornamental border contributes its share to the expressiveness of the whole. It is broken here and there by little medallions. The text, "I am become like a pelican in the wilderness" is inscribed over Christ's head. The medallion contains the mystical pelican, an old Byzantine symbol of self-sacrifice, because that bird was fabled to nourish her young with flesh plucked from her own breast. Eight medallions contain half-figures of Old Testament prophets, foretellers of the new dispensation. Of the remaining two (the lowest on either hand), that on the right contains the Erithean Sibyl, who says, "He shall die the death and sleep three days in the tomb, then shall he rise again from the deep, and, first of men, return unto the light." The

mediæval Sibyls, you must remember, were the personification of the divine voice in Nature, Christianised forms of Pagan divinities of storm and lull, changed into prophetesses. The man in the lowest medallion on the left may be one of the Greek sages, who were elevated by some mediæval theologians on to approximately the same platform as the Hebrew prophets. The words on his scroll are, "The God of Nature suffers." They seem to enforce the same idea as was embodied in the person of the Sibyl. They doubtless refer to the darkening of the sky at the time of the Crucifixion.

A Dominican tree occupies the frieze below the picture. It is an adaptation of the common type—the so-called stem of Jesse—where Jesse lies on the ground with the tree springing out of his body, the branches encircling and bearing as fruit the various ancestors of Jesus, according to the gospel genealogy. A well-known Stem of Jesse in England is the one decoratively sculptured as a moulding round the Chapter-house doorway of West-

minster Abbey. There the figures are arranged one above another, seated asleep, the stem winding in and out between them. The stem of this Dominican tree, passing through the hands of St. Dominic, separates into two branches and winds away to right and left, encircling a series of medallion portraits of the Saint's spiritual descendants. All are Dominicans, most Florentines. The names of some have been tampered with since Fra Angelico's day. As examples of portraits, decoratively applied, they are excellent; but so apparently simple and entirely unpretentious is the work that it attracts little attention from the swift sightseer.

The difference between such a Crucifixion as this and one painted by Giotto or his followers is a difference of kind. Those who see in Fra Angelico "the last of the Giottists" wrongly estimate the place of this master. Fra Angelico did not attempt to follow in Giotto's steps. In his Madonnas he deliberately turned away from the Giotto type and reverted to the Byzantine model, into which

he infused his own peculiar sentiment. Giotto had to attain skill in the expression of character and emotion, for upon that the meaning of his picture depends. Fra Angelico neither possessed nor needed such skill. The men he painted are usually of one character, which is that of their creator. He could not paint a bad man, nor a strong one. His devils are absurd. What we call evil was foreign to his nature ; his lack of sympathy for it was at once his weakness and his strength.

The fresco of Christ Buffeted, on a wall of one of the upstairs cells in San Marco, may be selected as a conspicuous example of the contrast between Fra Angelico's and Giotto's treatment of an event in the sacred history. Giotto would have painted it as though he had himself been standing by, and beheld the scoffing and the blows. Mark now how the Dominican artist approaches the subject. He makes no effort, indeed he definitely refuses, to depict the event. He raises the buffeted Christ high on a throne and invests His form with all the dignity his skill could attain. Serene and

unmoved, He is intended to appear a supernatural being, to whom all events are but the passing of phantasms. The buffeters are replaced by mere symbols—a hand instead of the striker, a head only for the scoffer. The kerchief round Christ's eyes is transparent and folded in perfect evenness. The voluntary and emblematic character of the suffering is thus indicated. The Divine dignity is not violated even in appearance. The instruments of seeming scorn are mere symbols. Of course, all this does not affect the artistic value of the picture, which is good or bad apart from the forms and details of the elements of the representation. But the spirit that guided the designer in his conception of the subject, guided also the hand in the execution of the work.

Sometimes, indeed, the formulating spirit of Dominicanism was inconsistent with artistic effect. Several examples might be cited from a series of panels, covered with paintings, which formed the doors of the sacristy-cupboards of San Marco. They are all in

the Florentine Academy. Some may have been painted by Fra Angelico himself; for all of them he was obviously responsible.* It may be that they would reward careful study by the light they might throw on the Dominican mind of that day, but some of them are bad pictures and even poor decoration. Let it suffice to mention a waved splash of inscribed scrolls containing the Apostles' Creed, and an emblematic representation of Sacred Writ, wherein the Bible is suggested by a wheel within a wheel, the spokes of the outer wheel being the Old Testament Prophets, those of the inner wheel the writers of the New Testament. Fra Angelico seldom thus artistically sinned. It is probable that he only did so in service of Holy Obedience, and that the responsibility rests upon the undiscoverable shoulders of some learned and inartistic Doctor.

At unequal distances round the walls of the

* Mr. Langton Douglas shows reason for assigning three of them (Baptism, Cana, and Transfiguration) to Alessio Baldovinetti. He points out the important position in Art-History of the landscape in the Baptism.

quiet cloister, which Fra Angelico used to tread, are doorways giving access to the various departments of the Convent. Over each doorway is a piece of the friar's fresco. So unpretentious are they, so quiet in forms and tones, that it would be easy to pass them unnoticed. I will cite one as an admirable example of a story pictorially narrated in the Dominican style. It is over the door that admits to the guest-chamber. At first sight it seems to represent and is intended to suggest the Appearance of Christ to the Two Disciples at Emmaus. It is, in fact, a sermon preached by the painter to his fellow friars on that text. Fra Angelico has transmuted the disciples into Dominicans, and Christ into a pilgrim to whom they are extending hospitality. Solemn, yet kind of aspect, He puts Himself under the friars' protection and looks to see whether they will know Him. His garment is of camel's hair ; there is a pilgrim's staff in His hand. The hat has fallen over on to His back, for it is evening and the heat of the day is passed. The nearer of the two friars is eager,

Fra Angelico. CHRIST AS PILGRIM.





Arundel Soc.

Fra Bartolommeo. CHRIST AND THE DISCIPLES AT EMMAUS.
San Marco, Florence.

Facing page 237.

beholding more than a mere stranger in this man. He grasps Christ's hand with one of his own, places the other affectionately under His arm, and gazes earnestly in His face. The other friar is less emotional, but not less kind.

In a cell on the upper floor, which used to be occupied by Savonarola, Fra Bartolommeo, in his turn likewise a friar in this Convent, painted a little fresco, borrowing the idea for it from this painting by his saintly predecessor. It actually represents Christ and the two disciples at Emmaus, Dominican symbolism having evaporated during the period that intervened. The front disciple, poor man, looks somewhat of a fool, with his short forehead stretching back so far. He takes hold of Christ's hand and says, "Abide with us." The other disciple is puzzled and seems to say, "We thought it should have been He." Christ's face is full of sad but loving reserve. You may search through all Fra Bartolommeo's pictures and you will find none such as this. The powerful influence of

Michael Angelo carried him away, as it did so many others. In spirit he was like Fra Angelico, but he lacked his sweet inviolability.

Fra Angelico in presence of the mighty Masaccio preserved his individual style intact, though enriching it continually by study of whatever seemed to him estimable in the work of his progressive contemporaries. He took from the first masters of the Renaissance so much as was consistent with the clear expression of his own ideals, but he took no more. He never clouded his ideal by attempts to render it in newer or more perfect corporeal forms than he was able to endow with his own full spiritual significance. Fra Bartolommeo preserved no such artistic chastity. In contact with the majesty of Michael Angelo's titanic forms, conscious of their power, their surpassing magnificence, he yielded to that influence. He thought by imitating the forms to attain the grandeur of the unapproachable master and he failed, as all must fail who imitate forms without

absorbing and incorporating into themselves the spirit that created the forms. Had Fra Bartolommeo been conservative, as Fra Angelico was before him, he would have left us a number of lovely paintings, instead of the half-dozen we can look upon with pleasure and all the rest that fill us with regret. I love, therefore, to look at this little fresco of his, and to think how the spirit of the humble Giovanni thus, even after his death, found utterance once again in the work of another.

In Savonarola's cell there hangs a relic of no small interest—the handiwork of Fra Angelico himself. It is stowed away in so dark a corner that one can hardly see it. Eyes accustomed to the gloom discover a small picture of the Crucified Christ, painted on a simple piece of white stuff. When the great preacher mounted the pulpit, this banner was borne before him. In those impassioned appeals of his, that electrified for a time the people of Florence, collected in crowded silence within the vast area of the newly finished Cathedral, it was to this very symbol

of his faith that he was wont to point, whereon are written the now faded words, *Nos predicamus Christum crucifixum.*

Such a picture, let me even once again impress upon you, was not intended nor thought of as representing an historical event. It was a symbol of Faith. In most of his "Crucifixions" Fra Angelico indicates this by introducing the figure of Dominic in devotion at the foot of the Cross, as representative of himself and all Dominicans. The friars' cells contain many frescoes of this type, painted by our artist or his assistants under his direction, and therefore to be reckoned as his work. The best fresco of the kind, painted by the master's own hand, is in the cloister facing the entrance. There are only two figures—Christ hanging dead upon the Cross, and Dominic kneeling in tears at its foot. The depth of feeling expressed in them is beyond translation into words. I do not mean that words cannot convey an equal depth of feeling. Doubtless all the Arts may be regarded as equally expressive, each in its

own fashion. What I would say is that the feeling expressed in this picture is pictorially conceived and pictorially expressed. An equal depth of feeling might be conceived and expressed poetically, but it would not be the same in all respects. Life is bigger than any Art. All that a work of Art can do is to image forth one aspect of the beauty of life. The aspects suited to different Arts are different. Love is a passion that all men know. It is expressed in Shakespeare in the language of Romeo and Juliet, by Wagner in the music of Tristan and Isolde. Both are expressions of the same emotion ; but you cannot translate the literary expression into music, though you may set it to music ; you cannot translate the musical expression into words, though you may accompany it by words. The emotion itself transcends all the expressions it has ever found.

All the work in Fra Angelico's picture is visible from seven or eight yards away. It was intended to produce its effect at a distance. Fra Angelico did not labour after

detailed minuteness of finish in fresco. The ideas he wished to embody were simple ; when they were expressed he was satisfied. Here he drew the outline of Christ's figure with great care against the dark blue of the sky. A line more expressively contrived and more subtly drawn you will not easily discover. He tenderly, but simply, modelled the form of the body, not desiring to attract attention to the form for its own sake, but anxious to make visible the weariness that led to death. "Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow ?" The lifeless head droops over towards the right arm, beneath which Dominic kneels. In the bending of the neck, though dead, there is suggested somewhat of benignity towards the sorrowing suppliant. The body preserves no sign of agony, nor the face of pain. Weariness, sadness, and now rest—that is all. It is not the face of an ascetic. The features are well-formed, the brow fairly arched and finely modelled ; the mouth is small, the thin lips gently closed. A white cloth, girt about the loins, floats in the breeze ; by his pictorial

magic the artist has invested the curves of it with the dreamy sadness that pervades the picture. In the grief of the kneeling Dominic there is no violence, but the more sincerity for that reserve. His moistened eyes are fastened upon Christ ; his forehead is wrinkled with care ; his brows are drawn up at the corners ; yet about the mouth there seems to linger the faint trace of an habitual smile.

We have already noticed one of the frescoes painted by Fra Angelico and his assistants in the cells upstairs. All are worthy of study, but time only permits us to consider one more. Let it be the Transfiguration, in one respect the most noteworthy of all, as manifesting qualities we should hardly look for in the work of so mild an artist. Reverence, humility, love—we look for the expression of them in Fra Angelico's pictures, rather than for dignity and majesty. Yet in this Transfiguration we shall discover a grandeur beyond that attained by Raphael in his last picture. Size is not indispensable for majesty ; there exist gems engraved by Greek artists with the

likeness of Zeus far more majestic than the colossal Sphinx. Strength of body is not essential, nor the aspect of commanding intelligence. The clearest vision of Divine Glory may be granted to the simple soul. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

The figure of Christ in this fresco is less than life-size. It is lightly, almost sketchily, painted in. It is drawn with no "boldness." It is not the figure of a strong or highly intellectual man. Not a muscle of the body is visible. The pose, prophetic of the Crucifixion to come, is altogether simple. Yet with such economy of means, how grand a result is obtained! Michel Angelo's Christ the Judge, with bared muscular chest and strong arms darting thunderbolts upon the damned, is a vulgar piece of bombast compared with this transfigured Christ, in which every line is laid in gentleness and every gesture posed in peace. In its emblematic Dominican fashion, the mystic event is perhaps as perfectly shadowed forth as could be. Nothing is introduced that

is superfluous to the idea. There is no elaboration of landscape, nothing to materialise the dream or bring it down into the solid world of every day. The hill is a mere symbolic mound, with neither flower nor pebble upon it. In the sky is never a useless cloud, nor in the garments a needless fold. It is the rendering in paint of a mystic subject, done by a mystic painter in an atmosphere of mysticism—a picture that could only be produced just when, where, and by whom it was produced ; one that we can still enjoy, but which to-day we could neither make nor imitate.

This, as I have before stated, is the value of old works of Art to later generations. Enshrining, as they do, bygone ideals they are unique. They could only be made when they were made. No one can imitate their spirit now, or ever hereafter. Fra Angelico could not exist in the twentieth century. He was possible only when he lived. His pictures then only could be produced. Their defects are conditions of their merits. Both were consequences of their time, products of

the same conditions as the ideals of that time. But if we cannot hope, and indeed do not desire, to imitate such works of the past, we can still enjoy them with a keen delight. Their very naïveté is a part of their enchantment. They transport our hearts to a younger day ; they give us back the childhood of our faith. Beside me, as I write, is a child's painting of her doll "Juliet!" No one would recommend grown artists to try and paint like that—they could not, however much they might try. Yet the rude drawing has an unmistakable childish charm. It takes the spectator back to his own early days and bathes him for a moment in the fountain of infancy. Somewhat similar is the delightful effect that works of developing, but still undeveloped, Art-schools of the past produce upon modern spectators who regard them sympathetically.

Before taking leave of Fra Angelico, there is one more painting by him, of essentially Dominican type, that calls for notice. It is the beautiful and famous little altar-piece, painted for the Florentine Church of the

Angels, and now in the Academy at Florence. The subject of it is the Last Judgment, with Paradise on the one hand, Hell on the other. We at once recognise in this picture the same kind of design which we find in frescoes of the same subjects in the Pisan Campo Santo and the Strozzi Chapel in St. Maria Novella at Florence. Christ is on high in the midst, between the Virgin and John Baptist; Apostles and Prophets are on either hand. Beneath are open graves in a double row, separating the newly-risen Blessed from the Damned. Hell is on the extreme right of the panel, arranged in *bolge*, as in other Dominican and Dantesque pictures. On the extreme left is the gate of Heaven. Hell is only noteworthy as showing Fra Angelico's incapacity to deal with such a subject. It has been suggested that he used to turn over his Hells and devils to his assistants to paint. It is not what we should expect of him. He was surely the last person to shirk an unpleasant duty. Besides, his devils and wicked people are so badly done as to afford *prima facie* evidence

that he painted them himself. Any less sweet-minded person would surely have painted them better. Few Italians really enjoyed painting devils and Hells. It is only north of the Alps that we find men whose imaginations revelled in such subjects—painters like Jerome Bosch, for example, whose ingenuity of diabolic invention rises almost to genius.

There is no real horror in *Fra Angelico's* horrified, no agony among the tortured, no visible despair. His imagination could not picture that kind of subject. In painting it he painted what he had heard tell of, not what he had seen. No good result is thus pictorially accomplishable, for painting is the incorporation of a thing beheld. The right side of this picture, therefore, is purely conventional and artistically non-existent. The other side, however, that of the Blessed, is an enchanting work. For the Hell the painter had types before him, which, though themselves poor, he failed to equal. For the Paradise he likewise had types, and easily surpassed them all.

The wings of his angelic fancy carried him away to regions of delight, which no painter had previously explored. There he was at home. They were the land of his daily dreams ; their inhabitants were his friends, the people with whom he was accustomed to commune in the quiet of his own heart. He knew how they looked and behaved. He knew them by scores and hundreds—whole populations of them. He could have gone on painting them for a life-time and not exhausted the supply. He had only to shut his eyes and they floated and danced before him.

The actual arrangement of this part of the picture was doubtless suggested by a portion of the Church Militant and Triumphant fresco in the Spanish Chapel. In that also there is a Gate of Paradise, towards which the souls of the Blessed joyfully run, guided by Dominican teachers. Fra Angelico borrowed the idea, but invested it with a beauty wholly his own. The newly-risen Saints stand or kneel for a moment in joyful adoration of their glorified Redeemer, now at last beheld.

They stretch forth their hands towards Him with exceeding joy. As they are thus employed their guardian angels find them out, greet them, and then with glad converse lead them towards the gate of their everlasting home. Holding one another's hands they dance with slow and graceful steps upon the flower-bespangled sward, till, caught up in a flood of golden light, they are borne within the walls of Heaven and seen no more. It was the joys of the celestial ante-chamber only that the painter dared to depict.

Nothing more perfect of its kind was ever painted than the Dance of the Blessed with the Angels. The like was never attempted, so far as we know, by another artist. Botticelli painted dancing angels, but they were boys and girls scarcely disguised. Fra Angelico's angels were the very incarnation of celestial spirits as pictured by mediæval fancy. No wonder people called him the angelic friar. He seemed to his contemporaries to belong himself to the angelic fellowship, and, in painting angels, to paint his equals and his friends. In Fra

Angelico the mediæval religious fancy obtained final expression. He was almost the last, if not the very last, Central Italian religious painter. No one, for instance, ever painted a Last Judgment again, as a thing actually believed in. Michael Angelo and Tintoret, in the Sistine Chapel at Rome and the Church of the Madonna del Orto at Venice, painted wonderful pictures on that theme, but they painted them as splendid dramas, not as representations of an event which might be expected some day to happen so. Those pictures were no more credible than a scene from *Paradise Lost* is, or ever was, credible.

Fra Angelico's Last Judgment and his paintings generally depict or suggest the things in which he veritably believed to his heart's core. He believed in Heaven and in Saints and Angels, believed with all his soul and without a shadow of doubt that they existed, just as certainly as the folk of his own day in Florence existed. His fancy depicted what his faith comprehended, or so much of

it as his nature could sympathise with. The time was close at hand when such simplicity of Faith was to be impossible to any man in the front ranks of his day's intelligence. The age of learning was already come. Less than a century was to pass before the lore of the past was to be reacquired, and students and men of action were to launch forth into new areas of knowledge and speculation, and physically into new regions of the earth. Fra Angelico had not been dead twenty years when Columbus discovered America. He over-lived the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, which produced so great an effect on Western learning. The forces destined to change the face not only of the fine Arts, but of all the Arts of life were already visibly operative in Fra Angelico's life-time, though their significance was not yet realised. The printing-press was at work. The new day, the day of the great European Renaissance, was at hand.

As Cimabue and Duccio had been the last, and perhaps the greatest, of the Italian

Byzantine painters, so Fra Angelico was the last and greatest of the Gothic painters in Italy. The spirit of his work is the spirit of the thirteenth century sculptors of Amiens, Rheims, and Paris. They and he would have understood one another perfectly. From the new spirit—the spirit of Masaccio, Michael Angelo, and Leonardo—he was sundered at heart by a world-epoch. He had no notable followers because he could have none. There no longer existed any environment in which they could thrive. Half-a-century later Fra Angelico himself might have starved for lack of employment and appreciation.

Like the earth, humanity demands a change of crops. It cannot for long continue to produce the same kind of growth. Each day has its own possibilities, just as to every individual in the world some things are possible, which are possible to no one else. Ideals succeed one another, sometimes by slow exchange, sometimes by rapid revolution. It was a revolution that was impending when

Fra Angelico died. There were men alive then who were to outlive Raphael and behold the triumphs of the mighty Michael Angelo.

But if the days that were to come were great, great also was the epoch now passing away—the age of chivalry and of faith, the heroic age of Western Europe. Great men of action it had produced, great kings, great prophets, great saints, great artists. Amongst them are to be numbered some of the most loveable human beings of whom we possess historical record. Not one of them all—not St. Louis of France nor St. Francis of Assisi—surpasses for still discoverable, still appreciable fascination of character the peasant's son of Vicchio, the humble Dominican friar, Beato Angelico of Fiesole.

When he died in Rome in 1455, they buried him in the Dominican Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and laid a monumental stone above him for memorial. It is simple, like the man and his works. He lies in his plain friar's habit, hands crossed upon his breast never more to hold

brush or be folded in prayer ; sightless eyes sunk deep in their sockets, but the trace of a smile lingering about the mouth. His name is modestly carved at his feet in the abbreviated form “ Io. de flor,” and these words are put in his mouth :—

“ Non mihi sit laudi quod eram velut alter Apelles
Sed quod lucra tuis omnia, Christe, dabam ;
Altera nam terris opera extant, altera cælo ;
Urbs me Johannem flos tulit Etruriæ.” *

* “ Be it not my boast that I was a second Apelles, but that I gave to Thine, O Christ, all that I had to give. Some works find praise on earth, others in Heaven. I, John, came of the flower of Tuscan towns.”

NOTE.—This chapter was written before I met with Mr. Langton Douglas’ valuable book on *Fra Angelico*. I have left it unchanged, but for the addition of a foot-note. Lovers of *Fra Angelico*’s paintings should read Mr. Douglas’ book.

THE END.

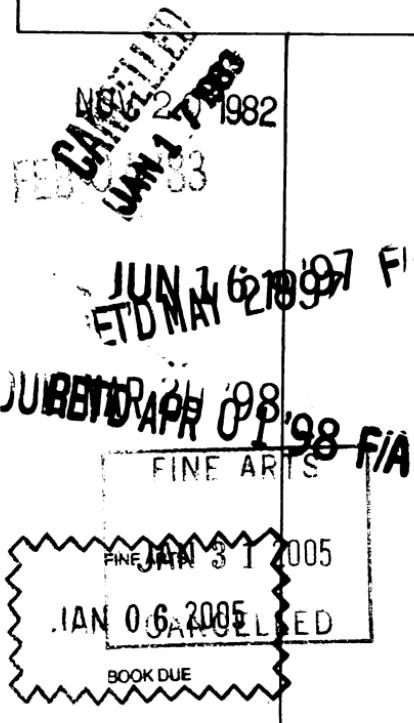
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